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Female Self-awareness and Self-realization: A Comparative Study of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

Thesis Submitted in the fulfilment for the Requirement of the Degree of

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is based on my original work except for citations and quotations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously and concurrently submitted for any other degree or award at any university or institution except for Dr. Moulay Tahar University.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, my small and big family whose unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in me have been my greatest source of strength. To Prof Omar Zaghewani, Prof. Ben mouffek Shahnez, Prof. BENOUMER Said and Mr. METLAINE whose wisdom and inspiration have guided me through every challenge, this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

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Abstract

This study compares two key works of postcolonial literature *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), by Susan Abulhawa and *Efuru (1966),by* Flora Nwapa focusing on female self-awareness and self-realization. Both novels provide powerful portrayals of women navigating complex cultural and political environments while grappling with social expectations and personal identity. In *Mornings in Jenin,* Amal, a Palestinian woman, deals with the consequences of generations of war and displacement. In *Efuru*, the story follows an independent Igbo woman in pre-independence Nigeria as she challenges gender norms. To explore how these novels portray female agency, identity, and autonomy within patriarchal and colonial systems, the study draws on feminist and postcolonial theories, including the works of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. The study considers the challenges of realizing one's self through two seemingly disparate sociopolitical contexts: in colonial Nigeria and in Palestine. Some significant themes such as hybridity, resistance, and intersectionality are presented to show how each of these factors in particular influences their identities and consequently affects the challenges they face in their defiance. The study also incorporates psychoanalytic theory, particularly the ideas of repression and self-actualization, to delve deeper into the psychological aspects of their self-discovery processes. The main aim is to shed light on how women's self-awareness emerges within rigid social, cultural, and historical systems, using a comparative framework. By examining the resilient paths of these women from marginalized backgrounds, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation around postcolonial feminism and psychoanalysis. The study demonstrates how literature can challenge gender-based limitations and deepen our understanding of female empowerment and identity formation, particularly in postcolonial and conflict-stricken societies, through the feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic lenses applied to *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*. Finally, the study reveals that both novels depict female self-awareness and self-realization, both novels emphasis the transformative power of self-discovery in two different socio-political contexts.

*Keywords***:** Female Self-awareness; Identity Formation; Marginalized Women; Postcolonial Literature; Self-realization.

ملخص

تقارن هذه الدراسة بين عملين رئيسيين من أدب ما بعد الاستعمار **صباح في جنين** بقلم سوزان أبو الهواه و**إيفورو** بقلم فلورا نوابا من خلال التركيز على الوعي الذاتي والإدراك الأنثوي. تقدم كلتا الروايتين صورًا قوية للنساء اللواتي يتنقلن في بيئات ثقافية وسياسية معقدة بينما يتصارعن مع التوقعات الاجتماعية والهوية الشخصية. في الصباح في جنين (2010)، تعالج أمل، وهي امرأة فلسطينية، عواقب أجيال من الحرب والتشريد. إيفورو (1966) تتبع القصة امرأة إيغبو متحرره في نيجيريا قبل الاستقلال وهي تتحدى الأعراف والثقافات المتعصبه. لاستكشاف كيف تصور هذه الروايات الوكالة الأنثوية والهوية والاستقلالية داخل الأنظمة الأبوية والاستعمارية، تعتمد الدراسة على النظريات النسوية وما بعد الاستعمار، بما في ذلك أعمال سبيفاك. تنظر أطروحة في تحديات تحقيق الذات من خلال سياقين اجتماعيين ادوارد سعيد و هو مي بهبها وكذلك جاياتري وفلسطين. كما يتم تقديم خطاباتها حول بعض الموضوعات المهمة وسياسيين متباينين على ما يبدو: في نيجيريا الاستعمارية مثل التهجين والمقاومة والتقاطع لإظهار كيف يؤثر كل من هذه العوامل على وجه الخصوص على هوياتهم وبالتالي يؤثر على التحديات التي يواجهها كل منهم في تحديهم. تتضمن الدراسة أيضًا نظرية التحليل النفسي، لا سيما أفكار القمع وتحقيق الذات، للتعمق أكثر في الجوانب النفسية لعمليات اكتشاف الذات. توضح الدراسة ايضا كيف يمكن للأدب أن يتحدى القيود القائمة على النوع الاجتماعي ويعمق فهمنا لتمكين المرأة وتكوين الهوية، لا سيما في مجتمعات ما بعد الاستعمار والمجتمعات المنكوبة بالصراع، الهدف هو إلقاء الضوء على كيفية ظهور الوعي الذاتي للمرأة في الأنظمة الاجتماعية والثقافية والتاريخية الصارمة، باستخدام إطار مقارن. من خلال فحص المسارات المرنة لهؤلاء النساء من خلفيات مهمشة. توضح الدراسة ايضا كيف يمكن للأدب أن يتحدى القيود القائمة على النوع الاجتماعي ويعمق فهمنا لتمكين المرأة وتشكيل الهوية، لا سيما في مجتمعات ما بعد الاستعمار والمجتمعات المنكوبة بالصراع، من خلال العدسات النسوية وما بعد الاستعمار والتحليل النفسي المطبقة على صباح في جنين وإيفورو

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوعي الذاتي الأنثوي؛ تشكيل الهوية؛ النساء المهمشات؛ الأدب ما بعد الاستعماري. تحقيق الذات

Résumé

Cette étude compare deux œuvres clés de la littérature postcoloniale, *Matins à Jenin* de Susan Abulhawa et *Efuru* de Flora Nwapa, en se concentrant sur la conscience de soi et la réalisation féminines. Les deux romans offrent des portraits puissants de femmes qui naviguent dans des environnements culturels et politiques complexes tout en luttant contre les attentes sociales et l'identité personnelle. Dans *Matins à Jenin* (2010), Amal, une Palestinienne, traite des conséquences de générations de guerre et de déplacement. Dans *Efuru* (1966), l'histoire suit une femme igbo indépendante au Nigéria avant l'indépendance alors qu'elle défie les normes de genre. Pour explorer comment ces romans décrivent l'agence, l'identité et l'autonomie féminines au sein des systèmes patriarcaux et coloniaux, l'étude s'appuie sur les théories féministes et postcoloniales, y compris les œuvres de Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said , Franz Fanon et Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Le document examine les défis de la réalisation de soi à travers deux contextes sociopolitiques apparemment disparates : dans le Nigeria colonial et en Palestine. Ses discours sur des thèmes importants tels que l'hybridité, la résistance et l'intersectionnalité sont également présentés pour montrer comment chacun de ces facteurs en particulier influence leurs identités et affecte par conséquent les défis auxquels ils font face dans leur défiance. L'étude intègre également la théorie psychanalytique, en particulier les idées de répression et d'auto-actualisation, pour approfondir les aspects psychologiques de leurs processus de découverte de soi. L'étude se concentre sur la façon dont la conscience de soi des femmes émerge dans des systèmes sociaux, culturels et historiques rigides, en utilisant un cadre comparatif. En examinant les parcours résilients de ces femmes issues de milieux marginalisés, cette recherche contribue à la conversation actuelle autour du féminisme postcolonial. L'étude démontre comment la littérature peut défier les limitations fondées sur le genre et approfondir notre compréhension de l'autonomisation des femmes et de la formation d'identité, en particulier dans les sociétés postcoloniales et touchées par les conflits, à travers le féminisme, Les objectifs postcoloniaux et psychanalytiques appliqués à Efuru et Matins à Jenin.

*Mots-clés***:** Conscience de soi féminine ; Formation D'identité ; Femmes Marginalisées ; Littérature Postcoloniale ; Réalisation de Soi.

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General Introduction

The concept of female self-awareness and self-realization in literature serves as a critical lens for understanding the unique ways in which women navigate complex socio-cultural terrains. In this comparative research, there are two important novels, *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa, which very powerfully depict the lives of women while navigating identity at a personal and turbulent socio-political level. Woven into unique yet comparably demanding cultural contexts, both novels negotiate ideas of female agency, identity, and pursuit of self-realization against patriarchy.

Actually, When I first received my research topic something stimulated me. I felt an immediate connection, as if the subject was speaking back to me. It wasn't just academic; it was personal. This thesis title reflects my own journey because for me, passing the PhD contest was more than just an academic milestone. It was the beginning of my self-realization as a woman, a researcher, and an individual with a voice worth hearing.

Efuru (1966) was one of the first novels published by an African woman to receive international attention. Nwapa focuses on the strong-willed and independent Igbo woman Efuru, who clashes with Igbo traditional life roles culturally qualified to women. Nwapa's recording of Efuru's story examines the tensions that arise when personal ambitions and self-concept come into conflict with societal orders. In the represented Igbo society, it is often a fact that one's identity as a wife and mother defines a woman. However, Efuru's life represents a different direction of discovery and strength outside these limiting roles. *Morning in Jenin*, on the other hand, is a current addition to Palestinian Letters, published in 2010, which tells a story of a Palestinian woman, Amal, overwhelmed by the continuing struggles of dispossession, war, and loss. Susan Abulhawa's novel plays out over four generations, entwining the tortured relationship between national identity and the quest for personal self-discovery. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Amal's journey transcends that of simple personhood but echoes a deep-seated questioning of what self-discovery is amidst a legacy of oppression and violence. The way Amal has fought trauma, family dynamics, and resilience reflects the complex side of women's self-awareness in war-torn regions.

Together, these two novels create a profound topography that forms the basis for understanding how women from different backgrounds negotiate identity, agency, and autonomy in the face of social and personal challenges. The present study aims to explore the similarities of experiences between Efuru in the traditional Igbo society of Nigeria and those of Amal within the

turbulent context of Palestine regarding the ways in which socio-cultural and political contingencies influence and shape female self-perception and self-accomplishment. In this regard, *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin* are crafted to illuminate the intricacies of postcolonial societies and the enduring impact of colonialism on their people, with a particular focus on the distinct challenges and experiences encountered by women in these environments. Building on these insights, feminist and postcolonial theory can be traced back to pioneering academics like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Their studies have considerably enriched our understanding of gender in the formulation of postcolonial identities and their relative power dynamics and points of resistance.

Most notably, the theories of hybridity and the so-called "third space" of Homi Bhabha have been quite relevant in the discussions of postcolonial identity. They point out the complex ways in which people with diverse formerly colonized backgrounds navigate multiple identities created by Indigenous and colonial cultures interacting. According to Bhabha, it is this hybridity that tends to disintegrate binary oppositions between colonizer and colonized, creating an indeterminate space where new identities will be constantly negotiated. His concept of homelessness, or the dislocation produced by a person torn between competing cultural allegiances, finds such strong resonance with postcolonial feminism because women in societies of a postcolonial variety often suffer additional layers of dislocation, both in public and private spheres, at the hands of patriarchy.

Another important indebtedness of intersectional postcolonial feminism is the outstanding work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, above all, her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Where Spivak explores the hegemony of Western discourses and how the latter have constantly produced the marginalization and silencing of subaltern voices, above all, the voices of women in the Global South. Her concept of the "subaltern" has put forward how colonized people are marginalized away from positions of power and visibility within dominant accounts because of their positioning in the social-political and cultural spheres. According to Spivak, postcolonial feminism ethically has to represent these people in their voices without interpretations or assumptions. Her critiques oblige scholars to cease looking at women through a lens provided by the West or the colonies and consider ways in which both feminist and postcolonial perspectives would offer them empowerment.

The work of Edward Said, particularly his formulation of *Orientalism,* provides an important foundation for understanding the ways in which Western depictions of the "East" have framed global understandings of colonized peoples as exotic, backwards, or savage. Edward Said's critique of Orientalism has indeed underlined that knowledge creation through the colonial ages was loaded to favour imperial power. It represents the non-Western cultures in a way that justifies colonial control. This discussion pertains to national identity and also to aspects of gender stereotypes-the way women from colonized societies have often been portrayed as either oppressed or overly sexualized. Yet, Said's theories bear particular importance in the feminist postcolonial analysis, the way literature and media representations influence and sometimes constrain postcolonial women's identities.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her seminal piece *Under Western Eyes*, provides a critique of the ways in which Western feminism almost uniformly generalizes women's experiences across cultures, at times reducing Third World women to a homogenous block of oppressed people. Mohanty reminds these broad generalizations of the complex realities of women's lives in the postcolonial contexts, which exclude agency, cultural differences, and subversive acts that assure challenge and change from within. She challenges a "feminism without borders" that invites the researcher to view postcolonial feminism as a locally contextual one, working in solidarities rather than working on uniformity. Of importance are Mohanty's ideas while having a closer look at such novels as *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, whereby the female protagonists reveal different ways of resisting themselves, depending on the particular cultural, historical, and political contexts.

These thinkers underline how significantly complicated a process the postcolonial identity has to be considered, above all, from the feminist perspective. Their ideas reveal how women struggle to confront complexly interrelated structures of oppression in a postcolonial context and further nuance what resilience means, independence, and reclaiming identity.

Black feminism and womanism are the most important frames of reference for feminist thought in the non-Western world, as their theories take into consideration the different realities faced by women of colour. Black feminism, according to such scholars as Bell hooks, deals with how race, gender, and class interrelate. It ascertains just how these systems of oppression have particular effects on the experiences of Black women. Black feminism departs from the mainstream feminist movements in a voice that particularly stresses intersectionality, underlining

various struggles faced by women of African and African-descendent origin. The womanist perspective term coined by Alice Walker expands this into an empowering vision composed of community, spirituality, and cultural heritage. This framing would apply more to the communities of Africa and those in the African diaspora, where personal presence is deeply intertwined with the community and spiritual grounds.

In a similar vein, feminist movements in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern societies arise in response to the particular challenges that the women of these places have to face. Scholars like Mohanty critique the tendency of Western feminism to generalize into missing unique challenges faced by women in non-Western contexts. Throughout her work, she has underlined that understanding gender oppression had to be done from the perspective of colonial histories, economic inequalities, and local customs. By adding contributions from Black feminism, womanism, and other non-Western feminist contributions, and how, in postcolonial, conflict-ridden societies, women reveal resilience, agency, and self-realization with regard to their particular cultural struggles.

The notions of postcolonialism and feminism can interlink through the ways both modes engage levels of power, identity, and resistance that exist within any given society, especially those left by colonial history. At the same time, postcolonialism examines how legacies of colonial rule continue into cultural identity, social structure, and self-conceptualization within a world created by such colonial legacies. These are influences that are sometimes deeply ingrained, even into social norms about things such as gender roles and expectations. It is within these influences that feminism really intersects with postcolonialism, looking at how those histories have particularly affected the lives of women since they experience a type of "double colonization" coming from both patriarchal and colonial systems. For an understanding involving gender oppression, feminist postcolonial scholars suggest that cultural and political contexts created by colonialism should not be overlooked. From the moments of postcolonialism, the shift to feminism enables an in-depth look at how the female characters in literature negotiate and fight against cultural pressures and gender-based limitations. It is through this approach that one gets to understand the manner in which autonomy and self-awareness can develop within societies affected either by colonialism or patriarchy.

Psychoanalysis, meanwhile, surely provides a helpful perspective to explore the psyche that underlies complex phenomena such as identity, double oppression, hybridity, self-consciousness, and self-realization at those junctures where feminism and postcolonialism overlap. Psychoanalysis, based upon the theories of Sigmund Freud, deals with the unconscious and seeks to investigate the inner identity formation through the unconscious fears, desires, and conflicts of an individual that define his sense of self. Freud's ideas of repression and the divided self can be applied to postwar people's experiences. Most of the time, they feel split inside when trying to balance their indigenous and colonial identities. Having two different cultures at once and with cultural hybridity brings about psychological confusion evident in the form of "unhomeliness," where one feels apart from others because of having conflicting cultural ties.

Frantz Fanon, in his works, critically analyses colonialism and its psychological and cultural impacts, particularly the trauma as a consequence of decolonization itself. Fanon comes up with this assertion from his witnessed experiences in Algeria's war of independence," Colonial violence is not only a physical affliction, but it is also a wonderful source of psychological malaise". In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he pointed out how colonially installed systemic violence is sadistic and racist and ends up producing a fractured identity for all those who have been colonized. He goes on to talk about "the Other" as an explanation of how colonized people become dehumanized in the eyes of the colonizer, objectified as inferior and different. Such exclusion from "us" into "the other" leaves individuals even lonelier and sometimes may lead them to being perceived as less than the others. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon also used the concept of this psychic injury to understand how it has affected one's identity and cultural imagination of a colonized person. Decolonization, according to him, is beyond politics. It undergoes drastic psychological changes, requiring a change in total identity. His work is very relevant to post-colonial studies when it comes to understanding how colonial violence, made through othering, influences current identity and resistance.

From his part, Abraham Maslow helps explain self-realization and self-awareness, especially through placing self-actualization at the top of his hierarchy of needs. In the context of postcolonialism and feminism, Maslow's theory has shown that people, doubly oppressed women, may not reach self-actualization so easily if their fundamental social, cultural, and personal needs are unfulfilled due to systemic inequity. In this respect, women find certain obstacles in self-

realization within a postcolonial setting, where the legacies of colonialism, combined with structures of patriarchy, significantly curtail their autonomy and agency.

This discussion has been further helped by Simone de Beauvoir and other feminist psychoanalysts who have explored how such gendered events bear upon self-awareness and identity. In her famous work *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir writes about the notions of immanence and transcendence. As she says, in patriarchal societies, women are condemned to the world of immanence-domesticity and passivity-whereas men are free to take an active part in defining themselves and fashioning their destinies. Although de Beauvoir's work is based on Western feminism, her ideas can easily be applied to postcolonial feminism based on the fact that women in the societies that have been conquered still have many of the same restrictions placed upon them that hamper their abilities to express their opinions and make their own choices. De Beauvoir's theory offers an insight into how women try to transcend the social chains that hold them in order to reach beyond the present and take their rightful powers even in societies that oppress them.

These psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial positions can be combined in a view that helps to reach a complete understanding of the ways in which identity, self-awareness, and self-realization are troubled by different levels of abuse and cultural mixing. This pattern of thought weaves together the theories of Freud, Maslow, and de Beauvoir, in a way that completes the picture of the individual's struggle, in particular, woman, to find her balance between the inner and outer worlds in trying to work out her identity within a complex social and political environment. This cross-disciplinary theory lighted the tortuous path towards self-awareness and self-realization, underlining how the psychological and social factors interact in the postcolonial women's life experience.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand how literature not only mirrors the lived experiences of women but also challenges and redefines the concept of female agency and autonomy. The current research, therefore, will try to shed light on the paths of self-realization of women who go through the struggle of living with pressures of cultural expectations, personal ambition, and, in the case of Amal, even generational trauma and national struggle through a comparative analysis of *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*. The comparative approach will outline the general features of women's resilience, as well as the deeply contextualized realities informing

each protagonist's trajectory in a search for an insightful understanding of how women draw a path toward self-awareness in diverse yet similarly repressive contexts.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru* portray the journey of female self-awareness and self-realization within their respective sociocultural contexts?

2. How do the protagonists' experiences relate to greater struggles faced by women in Palestine and Nigeria, and vice versa, and how do they influence their quests for self-identity?

3. What is the role of cultural and historical context in shaping Efuru's and Amal's way toward self-realization?

4. To what extent Flora Nwapa and Susan Abulhawa use characterizations, symbolism, and narrative structure to showcase how love, relationships, and motherhood interact with the protagonist's path of self-awareness or self-realization?

This research aims to add an understanding of female self-awareness and self-realization as represented in international literature, focusing on a number of key aspects. First, the work underlines the role literature plays in exploring and challenging limitations that women have been put upon by societal structures. Theorists further make their points that narratives can and do express gender-based restrictions. It gives an insight into how both the works by Nwapa and Abulhawa echo the different challenges faced by women in postcolonial Africa and war-torn Palestine, respectively. These events add richness to feminist literary critique, bringing into light the complex interactive relationships among politics, culture, and gender. The readers can delve further into a core knowledge base on agency and resilience that cuts across national and cultural boundaries, capturing perfectly the globally relevant concepts of identity and empowerment by delving into the struggles Efuru and Amal experienced along their journey of self-discovery.

The ultimate objective, therefore, is to lead the way for further comparative analyses of female self-consciousness in literature, particularly in postcolonial and conflict contexts, that will hopefully add to the academic discussion on how cultural and political contexts shape women's stories and lives. This research aims to add to the discourse on female identity and its multifarious dimensions of self-realization in diverse literary contexts.

Whereas Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* has been widely discussed and studied under African feminist discourses and Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* within the frameworks of Palestinian resistance narratives, what remains hugely wanting is a set of comparative studies that review how gender, culture, and self-realization interface in these two highly diverse settings. It also discusses the interrelationship between personal and collective identity, spirituality, and narrative techniques in the development of female self-awareness within the works under consideration and extends the debate within feminist and postcolonial literary studies.

Another boundary, that of private and collective identities, is weakly explored within both writings. In the case of *Efuru,* the rejection of traditional expectations of her womanhood as motherhood or marital fulfilment can be situated with African cultural norms in spiritual connections, particularly with a river goddess. Webbed together in *Mornings in Jenin*, the self of the protagonist has to do with greater themes of exile and the problematic Palestinian national identity. A discussion of the narratives will analyze how the novels differently and interrelatedly present female agency in their negotiation through the labyrinth of social expectation, personal desires, and cultural survival.

The existing literature inadequately explores the role of spirituality as a dimension of self-realization. While Efuru emphasizes spiritual identity through divine interventions, *Mornings in Jenin* portrays resilience and survival subtly as manifestations of spiritual endurance. This therefore presents a great opportunity for analysis of the influence of transcendent belief systems on female self-awareness within diverse cultural and historical contexts.

Lastly, there is almost a complete absence of scholarship related to the specific literary devices which Nwapa and Abulhawa have employed for narrating their stories of strengthening and individuality. Where *Efuru* situates its heroine through oral traditions, *Mornings in Jenin* locates her personal growth through the broader perspective of political upheaval by employing the tropes of historical fiction. Attention is gained to the way these angles of narration, voice, and language interact with cultural norms about female personhood and agency and, further, the ways in which these texts contribute to feminist and postcolonial literary discourse.

The present study aims to present a comparative analysis of *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, with a special emphasis on the interrelationship between personal and collective identity, the

impact of spirituality, and the narrative techniques that help the protagonists reach self-awareness and self-realization. This paper tries to relate the narratives of African and Palestinian women in view of discussions on the universality and specificity of female self-realization within postcolonial and resistance literature.

The basis of this comparative research will be a qualitative investigation into the two novels inspired by thematic exploration, character analysis, and narration style in order to test such complex female self-awareness and realization. In this respect, the research will further present a critical analysis of the experiences of the two protagonists, Efuru and Amal, in their similar and divergent lives of self-discovery. The latter has also been located within larger socio-cultural and political structures through the application of both feminist and postcolonial literary theories in order to expose the ways in which systemic confines and cultural imperatives undergird identity. Additionally, psychoanalytic theory is also featured in this study in an effort to profoundly probe the psychological aspects of struggles and transformations undergone by the protagonists. This study will highlight the complex interplay between personal agency and cultural context, applying an in-depth look at how Nwapa and Abulhawa make use of narrative strategies concerning reflection on and critiquing such societal constraints imposed on women. The broad methodological approach is directed at enriching the discourse of female empowerment and self-awareness in connection with postcolonial and conflict-related literature.

Therefore, to reach all this, the current thesis consists of four chapters, each touching on a different aspect of postcolonial literature: identity, resistance, self-awareness and self-realization. The structure of the thesis shows evidence of critical thinking regarding theoretical frameworks and literary works dealing with colonial legacies, gender norms, and the development of individual and collective identities.

The first chapter provides the theoretical background for analyzing postcolonial texts. This work presents basic postcolonial concepts: deconstruction of colonial ideologies, critiques of dominant narratives, and the meeting points of postcolonialism, feminism, and identity. Contributions by major theorists such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha set a foundation for the analysis of postcolonial discourse. The emphasis is upon the contributions of feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty and others, like bell hooks, to a nuanced understanding of gender and identity within a postcolonial framework. The first

chapter delineates the social and cultural contexts that shape identity and outlines the theoretical frameworks that will facilitate the literary analysis in subsequent chapters.

The second chapter draws the reader's attention to the social setup of pre-colonial Africa and emphasizes the complex cultural, kinship, ritualistic, and political dimensions of West African societies before they fell under the control of European colonizers. Such appraisal deeply probes into their role spaces and status of women, especially as embodied in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*. This chapter looks into the changing fortunes experienced by Efuru as she learns to navigate the very devious pathways of societal expectations while also embarking on a profound undertaking of looking within herself and a journey of self-discovery. This chapter further explains the ways through which Nwapa's text interrogates colonial impositions on patriarchal norms while also offering a feminist re-imagining of the interiors of African societies regarding tendencies towards gender.

Chapter three discusses in depth the protagonist of Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal, and her emotional and psychic journey toward self-fulfillment along with other characters such as Dalia, Sarah and Ismail. As stated earlier, this work does an in-depth analysis with the full rigour of subaltern identities, nostalgia, and dislocation of Palestinians falling in the context of Palestinian reality using postcolonialism and psychological analysis for review. This chapter explores how Amal grapples with her lost identity and struggles toward self-awareness, analyzing how Abulhawa represents Palestinian identity and the emotional weight of displacement while ultimately investigating the relationship between personal and collective self-realization.

The last chapter juxtaposes the two novels, *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*. This chapter examines how both novels depict the challenges already faced by women under the patriarchal colonial umbrella, with core themes of displacement, loss, self-discovery, and cultural persistence. It also reports a comparative study regarding both authors' narrative techniques that amplify the women's voices, which add value to personal and national identities.

Through this thesis we are going to investigate the ways through which postcolonial literature, with its stories and ideas, criticizes the supposed consequences imposed upon the culture and transformation of people's identities, especially concerning gender. This research aims to demonstrate how literature interacts with community identity, resistance, and representation in the

postcolonial context by analyzing two distinct literary works from different cultures and locations. This approach works toward contributing to the larger discourse on postcolonial identity, the role of women in literature, and how narratives create both personal and collected history.

Methodology

This research adopts an analytical and interpretive approach to examine how postcolonial theory illuminates the cultural, political, and psychological legacies of colonialism in contemporary discourse by incorporating Postcolonial Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism to explore the concepts of female self-awareness and self-realization. These theories provide a strong framework for examining how female characters navigate their identities within oppressive sociopolitical environments. The primary aim is to investigate how key postcolonial thinkers, particularly Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Spivak, and postcolonial feminists, expose the dynamics of power, identity, hybridity, and resistance shaped by colonial histories. Postcolonial Theory helps us understand how the protagonists of both novels negotiate the colonial legacy that shapes their personal and collective identities. Through this lens, we analyze how the characters' self-realization is impacted by their histories of displacement, colonization, and ongoing cultural struggle. Psychoanalysis, specifically Freudian and other humanist psychoanalyses, is used to analyze the characters' internal psychological conflicts, including issues of identity formation, desire, and the complexities of the unconscious mind. This allows us to explore the characters' emotional and psychological development as they move toward self-awareness. In addition, Feminist Theory provides insight into the societal and gendered forces at play in both texts. It illuminates the ways in which women struggle for autonomy, voice, and self-realization in the face of patriarchal and colonial systems that seek to limit their agency, freedom, and empowerment.

Research Philosophical Foundation

This study is rooted in postcolonial literary criticism, which views literature and cultural theory as sites where colonial histories, power relations, and identity formations are contested and renegotiated. This paradigm posits that texts are not neutral; instead, they are deeply embedded in historical, political, and cultural contexts shaped by empire and its aftermath. I justify this approach by examining how the authors and theorists I study directly engage with the enduring effects of

colonial rule, offering frameworks for interpreting issues of subalternity, hybridity, and cultural resistance.

Textual Selection and Data Source

The primary data sources are our selected novels Efuru and Mornings in Jenin in addition to key theoretical texts such as Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth, Said's Orientalism, Bhabha's The Location of Culture, and Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak?. Additionally, I engage with literary works and feminist texts by writers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes, Alice Walker, Buchi Emecheta, and Ama Ata Aidoo, and Simone de Beauvoir' The Second Sex whose creative outputs exemplify postcolonial feminist concerns. The selection process involves identifying sections where these theorists and authors address themes of colonial power, resistance, and identity construction. Secondary sources include critical articles and books on postcolonial theory and feminist discourse, used to contextualize and expand the analysis.

The analysis is interpretive and thematic. I undertake close readings of selected theoretical and literary texts, focusing on passages that reveal tensions between colonizer and colonized, the production of "otherness," and the double oppression of postcolonial women. Each excerpt is then examined through the lens of postcolonial theory, drawing connections between textual strategies and broader socio-political critiques. Techniques include thematic coding (for recurring concepts like hybridity, mimicry, subalternity) and comparative analysis (especially across feminist and postcolonial perspectives).

Justification of Methodology

This analytical and interpretive methodology is appropriate given the research questions centered on the legacies of colonialism and the cultural strategies of resistance. This approach allows for a depth understanding of how theorists and authors contest dominant narratives, reclaim silenced voices, and redefine postcolonial identities. By cross-referencing theoretical arguments with literary representations and historical contexts, the study ensures scholarly rigor and triangulation.

By employing these three approaches, this study is able to provide a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of how self-awareness and self-realization are constructed in Efuru and Mornings in Jenin. The combination of historical, emotional, and gendered perspectives offers a rich, nuanced understanding of the protagonists' journeys, making these theories the most appropriate for the study at hand.

Chapter one

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

1.1 Introduction

Understanding historical and cultural conditions that shape the postcolonial discourse is indispensable in the study of postcolonial literature and theory. A theoretical framework through which postcolonial texts can be analyzed is set out in this chapter, with an emphasis on the key concepts: deconstruction of colonial ideologies, critique of dominant narratives, and exploration of intersections among postcolonialism, feminism, and identity. The key figures to consider in this framework include Edward Said, who initiated postcolonial studies with his work *Orientalism;* Frantz Fanon, who wrote about decolonization in *The Wretched of the Earth*; and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* . The writer poses critical questions regarding the opinions of those who are never listened to. Homi K. Bhabha's "hybridity" contributes significantly toward comprehending the factor of cultural identity in a postcolonial context. Feminist thinkers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and bell hooks discuss Western feminist ideas and try to develop ideas of gendered experiences from a postcolonial point of view.

The chapter discusses how the aspect of "Otherness" and gender habitually forms part of individual and collective identity creation. Indeed, this chapter leads a strong foundation for a deeper discussion and analysis of literature as a tool of contestation and reinterpretation of colonial legacies. This chapter puts identity into a social and cultural context and debates the role of interpersonal relations and social structures in identity development. It then proceeds with feminist conceptions about self-realization-equal rights feminists, nineteenth-century suffragists, and current feminists. The section proceeds with the psychoanalytic feminism analysis by introducing conclusions by Franz Fanon, Simone de Beauvoir, along with the intersectional feminist theories by bell hooks. It also brings together global feminist perspectives that include post-colonial, Arab, and Third World feminist outlooks in a way that creates a detailed understanding of identity in an individual or collective sense.

1.2 Postcolonialism: Historical Foundations and Theoretical Evolutions and Applications in Contemporary Discourse

The concept of postcolonialism extends beyond a temporal framework and should not be confined to the idea of 'after-colonialism. This refers to critical ways of approaching the outstanding material and discursive legacies of colonialism that continue to be manifested today and influence the North and South's geopolitical and economic ties. This theory is metaphysical, ethical, and political, and it deals with issues of identity, race, ethnicity, and gender. It investigates the complex processes of constructing postcolonial national identities and the power-knowledge connection. This includes an analysis of how the colonial powers generated and used knowledge about colonized populations for their benefit, this knowledge has on the unequal dynamics between former colonizers and the colonized. As a literary theory, it refers to literature produced by authors in colonial countries as well as by colonized people who respond to colonial legacies through their literature by 'writing back' or challenging colonial cultural points of view.

This is the breakdown of postcolonial thinking in terms of how colonial countries' literature has justified colonialism by continuing to portray colonized peoples as inferior. It also looks at the ways in which authors from colonized or decolonized nations have attempted to celebrate, express, and reclaim their own cultural identities.

Definitions are intricate and disputed; similarly, postcolonialism lacks a singular beginning, instead comprising various responses to colonialism and decolonization that have motivated both liberation movements and scholarly investigation. Numerous answers originated prior to the time when the word postcolonial became prevalent and are now retrospectively asserted as aligned with postcolonial politics and cultural practices. The corpus encompasses the works of African-American W. E. B. Du Bois and South African Sol Plaatje from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, the Harlem Renaissance, the Negritude Movement of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the writings of diverse authors and critics such as Trinidadian C. L. R. James, Nigerian Chinua Achebe, Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, and numerous Commonwealth writers.

The 1960s and 1970s figures are today seen as the forerunners of postcolonial criticism. Nonetheless, significant factors affecting postcolonial thought since the 1980s can be attributed to

several prominent authors. One of these authors is, Frantz Fanon, who was arguably the most important intellectual of the twentieth century on issues of decolonization and the psychic effects of colonization. Born in Martinique and active as an anticolonial actor in French North Africa, his works influenced anticolonial liberation movements across the world and postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. His first work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), explored the psychic impact of colonial oppression on the African psyche.

Drawing on Fanon's own experiences as a Black intellectual in a white-dominated culture, the book explains the internalization of the colonizer/colonized relationship. A colonized man and product of French education, Fanon considered himself French; however, he felt severe dislocation when he encountered French racism, which deeply impacted his theories on culture and psyche. Fanon states that racism creates "pathological" schemata that blind the black man to his subordination to an idealized white standard and cause him to alienate his consciousness. It is worth noting that feminist writers have challenged Fanon's position because he failed to take into account the subjugation of black women such as bell hooks and Gayatri Spivak.

Ngũgĩ, a Kenyan author and the inaugural East African to publish a novel in English, adopted Fanonist Marxism in his third novel, *A Grain of Wheat*. He subsequently repudiated English, Christianity, and the name James Ngugi as colonial impositions. He adopted the name Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and commenced writing exclusively in Gĩkũyũ and Swahili. During his exile after a period of incarceration, he authored his seminal work, *Decolonizing the Mind*, in which he advocates for Africans to compose in their indigenous languages rather than European languages, to transcend the oppressions of colonialism and to cultivate a genuine African literature. Contemporary authors have utilized Ngũgĩ's concepts regarding the potency of language; some adopt the language of the colonizers to 'write back' from the periphery and reclaim postcolonial cultural identities. Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* exemplifies this, as its eclectic blend of English and Indian languages represents a departure from traditional Indian English literature.

Ranajit Guha, Gyan Prakash, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Spivak, and Partha Chatterjee were just a few of the researchers who, in the 1980s, came together to form the Subaltern Studies Group. They were all interested in postcolonial civilizations, particularly those in South Asia and, more generally, the developing world. When the latter first emerged, the group took a Gramscian

Marxist tack by telling the story of the subaltern peasantry rather than the privileged few. It was to challenge the bourgeois-nationalist bias in Indian nationalist history and the colonialist interpretations of Indian history, which marked the debates of the 1970s between historians from Cambridge University and traditional Marxist historians in India.

The Subaltern Studies Group represented one of the first waves in postcolonial theory and was extremely innovative in their work on non-elite political and social change agents, subaltern histories of insurgency, and the complexity of dominance and subordination. Unlike the more overt forms of social and political activism, such as protests and uprisings, the works of this collective focused on the intellectual and political creativity and active engagement of subaltern classes during the formation of nation-states. They also aimed to recover the lost voices of the colonized while pointing out the systemic inequality between the dominant and subordinate classes. As members of the collective started to incorporate more post-structuralist criticisms, tensions arose among those who were more dedicated to Marxist methods. On the other hand, these disagreements may have sparked discussions about topics like ideas that have shaped postcolonial thought since the 1980s, including historical materialism, knowledge production, and the (ir)retrievability of subaltern voices.

The principles of postcolonialism can be traced back to a wide range of different and distinct beginnings. Marxist political economy and post-structuralist approaches to cultural and linguistic analysis have had a considerable impact on the development of postcolonialism from a theoretical standpoint. The key thinkers who have had the most significant impact on the development of postcolonial philosophy are Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. However, the most influential remains Edward Said. For the most part, it is universally accepted that Said's *Orientalism* (1978), is the foundational text for contemporary postcolonial consciousness. Through this body of work, Said reveals the insidious and persistent Eurocentric biases that are perpetuated against Arabs and Islamic cultures. He accomplishes this through a dissection of faulty assumptions constituting the basis upon which Western perceptions concerning Asia and the Middle East are laid. Relating the theories of Frantz Fanon on binaries-or, in common terms, "othering"-Said argues that the ongoing process of composing misrepresentations and fantasies regarding the East, at minimum, implicitly rationalized and legitimized an actual motive behind the colonization and imperialism by Europe and the United States. He further blames Arab

elites for accepting and internalizing these Orientalist conceptions of Arabic culture with regard to Arabic culture. The use of Foucauldian theory, particularly the notion that colonial discourse has a deep material impact on the people being represented, and particularly prominent feature of Said's work.

Like Said, Bhabha objects to the way in which countries of the Third World are often homogenized into a singular, constricted stereotype. However, the work of Bhabha himself is distinctly different in that it is far more influenced by post-structuralist theory, particularly the works of Frantz Fanon, Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault. His work is also noted for its emphasis on the duality of colonial power, which gives us a more complex picture of how colonial control worked. In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha uses concepts such as mirroring and hybridity to question the way in which colonialism created two-sided oppositions, such as centre/margin, civilized/savage, and enlightened/ignorant. He says that cultures do not just fit into these two categories; they interact, break down, and change each other in more complicated ways than these categories allow. In such a line of thought, hybridity is a strong mode of hindering processes of dominance since it alters the meaning and structure of dominating discourses. This is part of the process where differences meet in what has been called the "third space," which allows people to negotiate and fight against cultural norms. It has been said that one of the many criticisms of Bhabha's celebration of cultural variety is his reliance on the notion of original, separate cultures. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the subversive potential of hybridization has been highly influential in postcolonial theory.

Many people consider Spivak's work to be among the most original and important works that have been produced in postcolonial cultural analysis. She links various ideas, as if each is integral but incomplete in tension with each other. This is why she is also often referred to as a Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist. The raison why of her work remains a concern for the state of the subaltern, particularly subaltern women, as far as their exclusion and marginality within both institutional and popular discourses go. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* her most important and controversial essay poses the question of whether the subaltern, the oppressed person, ever truly speaks for themselves or whether their viewpoint is always somehow twisted when represented.

The problem, according to Spivak, is not that the subaltern cannot speak but that the culturally powerful will not listen. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, she says even more

offensive things about the way in which European thinkers not only exclude the subaltern from their intellectual schema but also attempt to deny the non-European recognition as full humans. In addition, Spivak examines the relationships between discourse and global capitalism, with particular attention given to the ways in which Global South women become super-exploited labour. She also refers to the concept of strategic essentialism, when marginalized groups temporarily unite under common identities for social action. An idea that is very relevant in the context of feminist and women's organizations.

1.3 Overview about Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is born of the complex interaction of historical, social, and cultural variables subsequent to the era of colonization. Most newly formed nations from former colonies often struggled to find their identities against the oppressive background and imposition of culture by imperial powers. This tension is parallel to the very formation of black panethnicity, born out of reaction to racial identity in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and later periods of history such as Reconstruction. This is a prime example of how the legacies of colonial domination grapple with one another in the struggle of various groups. (Philip Q Yang et al). In simple terms, postcolonialism is the act of reclaiming those narratives and identities repressed by colonial history, informing contemporary discourse in cultural studies.

It is well known that with the emergence of any intellectual or political movement, heated debate over naming has always accompanied it, and this is for reasons relating to the political connotation of the name, among other reasons. The term postcolonialism urged a heated debate over its definition as long as it is still in formation and development, but its conceptualization is drawn from various fields and theoretical perspectives. This has been argued by several critics who further question its relevance in the twenty-first century. The meaning of the term "postcolonial" is multivalent, exactly as multivalent are the experiences and realities that come under such a term in societies of the colonial period. The topic covers the intricacies of decolonization as a consequence of imperial governance and continuous challenges about autonomy and self-determination. Scholars from various disciplines and intellectual traditions, with various insights and perspectives, contributed to the theoretical development of this postcolonial discourse.

Considering what the term means and implies, there is much diversity in the socio-political and cultural contexts of postcolonialism, works revising varied discussions and debates around the term intertwined with histories of colonial oppression and legacies of power imbalances that have continued into the present. Common critiques of postcolonialism are often applicability issues to reality today, questioning the term on the grounds of adequacy to represent the intricacies of global dynamics today.

Although many ongoing debates outbreak the definition of postcolonialism, it is nevertheless a very relevant framework through which one can understand and make sense of the legacies that have been left behind by colonialism. This concept forms a basis for which one may critically look at the role of power structures, social hierarchy, and changing cultural dynamics and how these factors shape the present world as we know it. Increasingly, as postcolonial scholarship develops, it has enabled new ways of taking a close look at and reassessing the complex ways in which identity, power, resistance, and culture are produced, reproduced, and performed in an often multiply networked and linked world.

The roots of postcolonialism run deep in the historic resistance to colonial rule and imperial power "historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control" (Young ,p.260). Because this concept is rather obscure, the centrality of colonialism has to be deconstructed and defined in order to outline the meaning within. The term "postcolonialism" has complexity: obscurity, diversity, and, above all, misinterpretation, all working together to create an evolving and mostly contentious sharing and bartering of views. These are complexities underlining the significant differences among scholars and postcolonial theorists, such as Ania Loomba, Aijaz Ahmed, and Bill Ashcroft, who bring forth a different interpretation from others of what the foundational implications have been. The complex play of views makes postcolonialism a continuously debated academic and critically analyzed topic.

The concept of postcolonial is essentially characterized by its instability or lack of definition generally agreed upon by scholars. Nevertheless, despite the ambiguities in terminology and restriction inherent in a term, an insight into postcolonialism is given by probing into the more complex matters. Originating from the Western linguistic circles, it generically refers to the socio-political as well as the cultural context that has emanated after the official departure of colonial masters such as Britain and France from those countries, including Mali, India, and the Caribbean.

The term postcolonial, hyphenated or not, has, in effect, replaced earlier terms like Commonwealth and Third World, both now considered anachronistic. The postcolonial critical condition exists as an indispensable mode of inquiry, usually through literature, with which to challenge the unique complications that arise from two interacting cultures, usually based on one culture's assertion of superiority over another. In its most simplistic interpretation, postcolonial literature refers to works generated by people from nations who had previously belonged to or were occupied by colonialist empires.

The colonial period was one of gross psychological violations and incidents of brutality that thoroughly violated human dignity. Consequences of the manifestations of aggression and appropriation have gone through the times and have had a strong impact on the psychology of individuals and society. This, therefore, raises the most fundamental questions, to date, into issues of historical injustices and the possibilities of continued neglect due to an absence of accountability. Safeguarding and restoration of human dignity are central to the debates that surround postcolonialism.

Another concern for the colonized people is the lasting impact of colonization, whose shadow still haunts them. The question is whether "these issues are being sufficiently addressed and resolved, or do they constitute long-standing traumatic wounds of the past?" Ella Shohat poses this question and likens it to the one, "When, then, does postcolonialism begin?" (Loomba, 2005). This question exposes the complex dynamics of the postcolonial condition. Mark Taylor (2001) appropriately comments that "there is no simple epoch after colonialism."

In their writings, writers like Ashcroft and others of his school use the word "postcolonial" and examine it in their critiques to try to arrive at all of its subtleties and complexities. These scholars suggest that the concept should be comprehended to encompass all the divergent practices and constructed landscapes of postcolonial nations from the time of colonization up to the present. This perspective is contrasted with the idea that colonialism exists until a country gains its independence. Instead, it shows the effects of colonial systems and ideas that persist well after official decolonization, "it is best used to designate the totality of practices […] which characterize the societies of the postcolonial world from the moment of colonization to the present day since colonialism does not cease with the mere colonial mode to be active in many societies". (Ashcroft et al. 1995.p,15)

Whether situated in the "pre," "during," or "post" phases of colonialism, and regardless of hyphenation, the nature of postcolonialism is a serious tool with which one resists, confronts, critically analyzes, and, finally, seeks liberation. It is a strong influence that speaks for itself through literature, the power of language, the power of speech, and the extended capacity of the human brain. In that aspect, the conflict between two cultures is especially evident in the case where one culture is proclaiming dominance and control, with a supposed superiority over the "Other." It reflects the colonizer's claim to be the ultimate authority in truth and perfection within the global structure. It is requisite in the postcolonial study of cultural power and structures. This is why an understanding of the nature of colonialism is in need.

1.4 The Significance of Postcolonial Discourse in Theory and Practice

It was during the mid-twentieth century that, amidst these complex structures of colonial rule and domination, a critical discourse started to assume a form. Its role is to foreground the voices and narratives of the colonized. This intellectual movement has come to be known as postcolonialism, which questions the many faces of colonialism regarding their durability in the spheres of culture, politics, and economy. It being so, issues related to identity, power politics, and ways of representation would be difficult not to notice and whose impact has continued to be felt in former colonies. Through the works of theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, this field has since covered a wide array of perspectives, tending to highlight cultural hybridity and the rewriting of history from subaltern positions.

A more appropriate understanding of postcolonialism needs to take into consideration its multidimensional nature and the strong presence that it engenders in contemporary discourse. In very basic terms, postcolonialism looks at the consequences of colonialism in former colonies and how those processes continue to provide meaning for modern-day identities in their social, cultural, and linguistic dimensions. (Rosa J et al., p. 621-647).

Postcolonialism analyses development discourses as structurally ethnocentric, adhering to European cultural norms and reflecting a dominant Western viewpoint. It questions the notion of development, which often carries within it the symbols of colonialism-where the Global North is seen as civilized and modern, while the Global South is relegated to inferiority, degeneration, and primitivism. On many levels, postcolonial thought provokes critical questions concerning the

potential benefits of indigenous systems, steeped in sharing, mutual aid, and collectivism, to people in the South versus capitalism with its focus on individual wealth accumulation and incorporation into the larger market economy.

Moreover, postcolonialism critically examines the frameworks through which the world is perceived; it questions the usually unconsidered presuppositions on which Western academic disciplines are grounded. These presuppositions hardly ever take into consideration the meanings, values, and practices that are inextricably linked with cultures. The taken-for-granted belief in the superiority of modern industrialization and technology is increasingly being questioned, and in the process, alternative epistemologies have emerged that seek to reconceptualize the way in which non-Western cultures understand themselves and their environments. Yet, language is central to how development interventions are framed, interpreted, and legitimated. Postcolonialism provides valuable insight into what development is and how to conceptualize alternatives to development. Texts on development are written in a language of representation that employs metaphors, imagery, allusions, and rhetoric in order to create idealized visions of reality. Coulthard states that from a postcolonial perspective, one may engage in exploring the complex, multifaceted manners in which race and language interrelate, highlighting how the legacy of colonial history gives rise to durable inequalities and differences. This standpoint, therefore, calls for a more structural approach to the analysis of linguistic ideologies and power relationships that keep in mind the fact that colonial legacies persist as structural racism and cultural hegemony. In this manner, postcolonialism is both an intellectual critique of historical traditions and a catalyst to a dialogue on justice and equity in an international setting, an issue underlined throughout current discourse on identity and resistance today (Hallenbeck J et al. p. 111-120.)

Critics such as Edward Said and others argue that such representations often come far from reality and represent misrepresentations that build stereotypes. Postcolonialism would interrogate and deconstruct such unhelpful representations and encourage the thoughtful rethinking of terms such as "Third World" or "developing world." It further underlines the need for a deeper understanding of how factors like geographical location, economic role, social identity, and the global political economy affect the development potential of communities.

Postcolonial criticisms point to the ways in which writing and language are used to construct prevailing narratives. For instance, terms like "developing" or "Third World" reduce and

homogenize the identities of countries and peoples, often linking those countries with images of political instability, economic underdevelopment, and an opposition between "us" and "them" or "self" and "other." This naming is not neutral but rather part of what Spivak has called "worlding". Said says that knowledge itself is a kind of power giving authority to those in possession of it and is very often associated with violence. Most of the knowledge has traditionally been produced by the West, and it still commands the majority of the authority to define, represent, and theorize. Postcolonialism aims to challenge and disrupt this monopoly of knowledge.

Postcolonial development theorists argue that the discourse of development is one factor implicated in strategies of inclusion and exclusion through the suppression of some voices at the expense of others, in authorizing particular interventions but always marginalizing alternative ways. These contributions note the complex power dynamics at play, by which dominant forms of knowledge continue to be privileged over others.

Amidst these discussions, silences are deliberate, and postcolonial methods seek to expose who is silenced and why. Development ideas do not occur in a space but rather as part of a broader development industry that is inseparably connected to power relations and domination. A scrutiny of the literature on development from a postcolonial perspective, therefore, reflects valuable findings on how such literature comes to being, gets disseminated, and becomes perceived by its readers.

Development discourse not only calls for but also legitimizes real policies and practices that have significant consequences in the real world. In contrast to the postcolonial critics who hold that these kinds of approaches result in a "descent into discourse" in which the effects of development language are limited to text and change is impossible, postcolonialism offers the possibility of exploring the relationships between language, practices, and institutional articulations of development. It also examines the interrelationship between the power of the world and the words and images that represent it.

postcolonialism provides, perhaps, the most concentrated insight into the various spatial and temporal metaphors deployed within development discourses. Whereas earlier conceptualizations of the developing world stressed spatial and temporal differences the developing world as distant in space and backward in time postcolonial perspectives argue that the

so-called "other" world is, in fact, part of our world. The so-called "developing" regions are crucial to Western notions of "modernity" and "progress," which have provided, through their labour and resources, the very foundation for Western nations' economic prosperity. Further, the modalities and aesthetics of former colonies have invaluably contributed to the development of Western languages and cultures. In this sense, postcolonialism attempts to redefine the dominant discourses of temporality (history) and spatiality (power) that constitute the developing world. The aim is to recover the silenced stories of the marginalized and oppressed, which will facilitate a transformative reimagining not only of history but also of knowledge production that reinstates the agency and resilience of those who have been subjected to colonial and neocolonial domination.

It has produced every kind of counterfeit voice representing others, but it has to come from claims about authority and the way the voice is established, and it has brought a new and extreme challenge to representation. It has caused one to rethink the representation of formerly colonized peoples or to pit its critical voice against the Western voices into which non-Western voices have been forced to fit. For these upper-class political institutions, which have usually been very male-dominated, such groups are increasingly looking towards popular development strategies instead of being portrayed as mere victims of development. It primarily applies to gender and development, making postcolonial perspectives ones in which there is no absolute, centrally Western feminist vision and thus opening spaces for Black women's voices and voices from the Global South.

Postcolonialism has a very strong bearing on the reshaping of gender and development in that it interrogates dominant feminist discourses. This is different from one single, Western-centric feminism based on the ideas of white, middle-class women that do not take into consideration the diverse experiences of women. The postcolonial approaches pave the way for the emergence of platforms that raise the voices of Black women and those from the Global South. Postcolonial feminism espouses the inclusion of diverse and competing voices against the colonial structures of power that locate the West as the only legitimate knowledge producer, while Western women speak for the "silenced" sisters in the South. The juncture of feminist concerns and participatory approaches is quite complex. While these methods are limited in some sense and do not always

generate efficient results, they nevertheless try to address postcolonial challenges of agency and attempt to listen more directly to subaltern voices.

1.5 The Psychological and Societal Impacts of Colonialism

Colonialism is a critical historical event that shaped the structures of societies by establishing systems of racial and linguistic superiority that continue to impact contemporary social arrangements. Longstanding inequalities were created from the structuring of race and language during and after the era of colonial rule.

These inequalities have implications for understanding the relations of contemporary society. Clearly, colonial history gave rise to racial and linguistic categorization that too often relegated Black and Indigenous peoples to the margins in each sphere of life. It does so, as illustrated by Black and Indigenous peoples in Latin America. Some of the social movements that have emerged because of these disparities have raised awareness of the complex interrelations and struggles between language power and racial power, which have fomented efforts toward justice and equity. Scholars, for their part, have developed a critical consciousness that demystifies the conceptions controlling the legacies of colonialism. This has made it possible for postcolonial studies to facilitate a greater understanding of identity

The colonizer's ideology is meant to permeate the consciousness of the colonized people, extremely affecting their psyche. It is a conscious practice taken to produce psychological effects, among them inferiority complexes and lowered self-esteem, in the name of the natives' civilization. This led to traumatic consequences for colonial peoples, who were taught to think about their culture, identity, and identities in negative ways.

Some scholars argue that a broad and complex definition of the term suggests that true national independence can only be achieved at a time of colonization. They also include modern aspects such as "globalization," which implies that the rise of the Western world above the rest is a result of these processes (Ashcroft et al., 1995.p,194). The significance of the term postcolonial is brought about by the endless debate that surrounds it. The continuing debate forced the editors of the second edition of *The Empire Writes Back* to reconsider and re-conceptualize the concept of postcolonialism.

Additionally, Landow asserts that the countries classified as postcolonial have experienced a significant shift away from imperial dominance, marking a crucial aspect that merits careful consideration alongside other themes that have shaped the field of postcolonial studies. The initial colonization phase saw the colonizers embarking on what they termed a "civilizing mission" among the indigenous populations. However, this endeavour primarily involved imposition their own literature and cultural norms, ultimately aiming to erode the distinctive identity of the colonized communities. Nonetheless, the global dissemination of intellectual awareness following the aftermath of World War II significantly undermined imperial authority. This dissemination also heightened awareness among the once-colonized nations about the impending political transformations.

In the post-modern context, those who have endured the effects of colonization envision a time that has often been viewed as one which has moved well beyond not only the colonizers but also their repressive policies and their autocratic rule. In the end, colonialism proved to be nothing much more than a historical monument of great suffering. It was characterized by a number of tragedies, beset with both physical and psychological violence. The legacy produced effects such as collective trauma, erosion of cultural identity, and feelings of inferiority and dispossession among the colonized, which have affected generations in social and psychic experiences: long-term effects.

This sudden and violent tempest ruthlessly descended upon the homes of the colonized, laying waste to their fortunes and prized possessions. However, its most egregious assault was not confined to the physical realm; it brazenly intruded upon both bodies and minds. Under its tyranny, individuals were coerced into relinquishing their timeless essence and embracing a contemporary self-concept. This imposition extended beyond personal transformation, as it compelled them to shed what was branded as antiquated religious beliefs, languages, and traditions in favour of a facing of civilization. In the aftermath of this tumultuous upheaval, the post-colonized communities were afflicted with enduring maladies and lingering wounds. These wounds festered into unhealed sores that served as constant reminders of their painful past.

Within this tumultuous landscape, the identity of the native inhabitants underwent a profound transformation. It became fragmented, marked by the absence of vital components that had once been integral to their sense of self. Moreover, a sense of detachment from their roots

became more pronounced, manifesting as a troubling ignorance of their ancestral heritage. This loss of connection to their origins was further exacerbated by the pervasive erosion of their cultural and linguistic legacy. A nebulous "in-between" space replaced the once-solid ground of belonging and the roots that anchored their existence. A sombre "post-tragedy" and "post-drama" unfolded within this nebulous space, epitomizing the profound upheaval and enduring aftermath that characterized the postcolonial experience.

1.5.1 Formation of the Self and Identity in Postcolonial Societies

Identity is conceptualized as the understanding of an individual or group's nature, and any consideration thereof is essentially fixed in theoretical developments within the human sciences that emphasize the social processes involved in its construction. Identity is, by nature, multi-dimensional and consists of several intertwined identities, such as social and cultural roles and belonging to a nation, ethnic group, and place or region, for instance, African, European, Chinese, and Indian. In addition, identity encompasses the economic and political dimensions as well, and it has a historical dimension, often marked by intersecting categories of gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and culture.

Identity is both innately social and originates at the individual level since each person has various social identities that carry political and cultural meanings. Belonging to a minority or colonized group, for example, reveals how identity intersects with greater social institutions. In relationships of power, for example, dominant groups define the perceptions of minority or colonized groups, and these identities take on unique meanings within social connections. This influences both personal self-concept and figure reactions.

The core of identity development is the awareness of placing more emphasis on the idea of identity itself. It looks at how the self is contested as both a state of being and a form of awareness. It also looks at how name and voice interact, which is a theme that Foucault and Charles Taylor's writings dig deep into. The focus on creating and recognizing identity is huge and only getting more complicated, a fact which itself speaks to the tremendous disagreement among people regarding how important, as well as visible, identities are (Calhoun, 1995).

Also, the various roles an individual may play within the political, economic, and social contexts can bring about the fragmentation of the self, and it often does (Calhoun, 1995). Acquiring

and internalizing cultural characteristics related to these contexts during an individual's life determines their "cultural identity." Stuart Hall indicated in 1990 that there are at least two distinct but interconnected ways to approach the concept of cultural identity. This shows how dynamic and multifaceted it is.

These unknown identities have played a significant role in shaping the post-colonial struggles that have had far-reaching effects on our modern world, and their exposure is crucial. Cultural identities are not fixed; they are fluid, shifting incessantly, and serve as flexible markers within the narratives of history and culture. The relationship between social and personal identity is more complex than it seems. Social identity is the shared traits that link individuals to social groups, whereas personal identity describes the unique qualities that differentiate one from others. This difference really shows in the intricate balance between the feeling of belonging to something and embracing what makes one. From an idea of identity, the genuine self-understandings of indigenous peoples were deliberately altered to comply with the imperial intentions imposed on them. In pre-colonial societies, identity emerged through a process of local invention, continuity, and adaptation over thousands of years, developing within indigenous social and cultural contexts (Abdi, 1999). This comment carries a very important weight since identity is essentially dynamic, always changing, and contextually susceptible to situational imperatives (Hartman, 1997; Ghosh, 1996; Hall, 1990).

The identities constructed during the colonial era are peppered with derogatory labels-"savages," "uncivilized," "lazy," "irrational," "uneducated," "untrustworthy," "unreliable," and "unpredictable"-essentially adopting two functions against the backdrop of colonialism. First, these identities serve as justification for the conquest of foreign lands and their exploitation after that. On the one hand, these also awaken a sense of inferiority and self-deprecation among the natives, which in turn facilitates their complicity in their marginalization and the deprivation meted out to them as systemic. The dynamics presented are quite essential in the brilliant analysis by Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1991).

One of the most noteworthy historical signs, colonialism changed societies into what they were by building systems of racial and linguistic supremacy that persevere in different forms to this day. Simultaneously embedded under and following colonial rule, race and language development created durable inequalities in the comprehension of modern social dynamics. The

connection of Black and Indigenous peoples in Latin America is exemplary in showing that the colonial history created racial and linguistic categorization, often relegating them to marginal positions in every level of society, the narration to the structures. Aside from this, the social movements that start as an aftermath of such inequalities have also brought into light how these racial and linguistic powers interrelate with each other and contradict each other, energizing movements toward justice and equity. It is in this regard that the scholars come to an important consciousness of demystifying the concepts governing legacies of colonialism, hence making it easy for them to understand identity and power in postcolonial studies.

The ideology of the colonizer is strategically laid out to pierce through the consciousness of the indigenous people; it attacks their psyche to instill in them the feeling of psychological subordination. This is a deliberate process that looks forward to making the minority groups feel inferior and less of themselves, all in the name of "civilizing" them. As such, this became "the source of trauma for colonized peoples who were taught to look negatively upon their people, their culture, and themselves". (McLeod, 2000, p. 19)

Frantz Fanon is considered an important theorist with respect to understanding both the psychological and social issues arising from African colonization and how to approach decolonization. His extensive deliberation on the experience of suffering by the colonized Algerians, particularly on the psychological struggles and issues of identity they have faced, is well-voiced in his milestone book entitled *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1968. A major idea that Fanon discusses in this text is the relationship between colonizers and the colonized, where natives, influenced by colonial rule, often deny their identity and fail to recognize who their real oppressors are, which is the colonial powers. Instead, their feelings of rage, aggression, and violence tend to be channeled into the very people they live amongst. Here, the colonized individual has had their identity deconstructed through the passing years and avoids the source that is really causing their plight: the oppressive colonial regime. Fanon encourages recognition of that fact and promotes the armed struggle as the path leading to liberation.

Many people regard Fanon's 1967 book *Black Skin, White Masks* as one of the most powerful analyses of the identity crises that colonized peoples-especially Black people who were oppressed by European colonial powers-face. In this work, Fanon critically examines the psychological condition of Black colonized people and considers possible avenues for their

psychological rehabilitation, sociocultural reconstruction, and salvation. Through his deeply introspective perspective on what colonialism has done, takes away, immobilizes his identity for one reason then reshapes for another, Fanon poetically writes, ". On that day completely dislocated … I made myself an object and removed myself from my presence—far away, in fact" (p.112).

For instance, Achebe deals with the disintegration of the cultural and identity-based structures in the colonized societies, which is visible from the seminal work titled *Things Fall Apart* (1958). This is one major narrative that portrays a society, once united and cohesive since the pre-colonial age, whose life takes great turmoil with the onset of a disruptive influence initiated through colonial engagement. Achebe explains how such a meeting creates a strong psychological impact on the individuals involved, often leading to tragic consequences: suicide or exile from one's community. For instance, the suicide of a colonial Nigerian man who was previously a great man engrosses a colonial commissioner and leads him to write a book that articulates his puzzlement over the incident. Achebe's narrative poignantly reflects the deep-seated effects of colonialism, which show how deliberate damage to emotional and existential well-being translates into individuals being bereft of any path towards ontological redemption. It is in this context that the decision to violently renounce the falsely ascribed identity from without becomes much more comprehensible. Paradoxically, these acts of defiance go diametrically opposite to one of the chief purposes of colonialism: making the colonized people acquiesce passively to their colonial agenda.

As Achebe reminds in *Home and Exile* (2000), one of the ways in which colonialism transformed the societies and identities of the colonized was via European writing. For European readers, these writers presented themselves as the best qualified to explain vita Africana. By utterances like "I know my natives," they set the rules and told the stories of life for hundreds of millions of colonized people, supporting the colonial goal and keeping these people under control.

Not only language that effect postcolonial societies but also educational framework established in the Third World colonies served as a pivotal instrument for cultivating an acceptance of the colonial narrative. More often, education functioned as a mechanism for the distortion of identity and the cultural estrangement of colonized groups. An illustrative case is India, where Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education sought to cultivate a class of individuals who, despite their Indian heritage, would embrace English tastes, manners, speech, attire, worldview, and aspirations. This was not unique to India; it was a universal approach in all colonies with the

express purpose of creating a social class among the native population that would support the perpetuation of post-colonial acquaintance governments and elites, thereby guaranteeing the continued influence of colonial powers in these former territories. (Abdi, 1999.p, 2002).

Although colonial education had some benefits, such as the fact that it contributed to the development of liberation movements and also facilitated technological changes in many fields, it was definitely harmful to the spiritual and identity equilibrium of the colonized . The suppression of Indigenous languages, together with the promotion of colonial languages, was another important part of this identity-changing strategy aimed at enhancing the alleged supremacy of the latter languages (Wa Thiongo, 1986.p,193)

In other words, postcolonial scholars explain that genuine independence can be actually accomplished only after colonial history has been lived, through reclaiming and reestablishing one's identity and powers. Furthermore, the modern phenomenon of globalization demonstrates that colonial patterns and dynamics persist, as strong influence is still exercised on previously colonized areas by colonizing Western nations. These debates reveal the fluidity and complexity of the term 'postcolonial' and how editors of *The Empire Writes Back* reconsidered the definition in light of the continuing debates. This discourse encourages deeper reflection on how historical legacies shape contemporary structures of power and identity.

1.5.2 Redefining Women's Identity: Postcolonial Struggles and Literary Representations

The search for identity has long been important to humanity's quest for significance and meaning. However, the self in postcolonial societies is in crisis, attacked from all sides. According to 2004 Kenyan Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai, an environmental activist and writer, commented that for these communities to develop a future, they must confront their history. Many publications on the horrible colonial history of these cultures highlight many of the challenges they continue to encounter and link their origins to that time. Such testimonies recount their loss of identity through transatlantic slavery, colonial domination, and the break-up of centuries-old structures in their societies.

A major concern in postcolonial women's literature is the representation and re-imagining of women's identity. The concept of identity is multifaceted and multi-dimensional. According to Gubar and Gilbert (2004), identity is the quality or condition of being uniform in substance,

composition, nature, or properties, marking a stable distinctiveness or sameness. The question of identity is explored within the framework of social divisions that sustain women's subordination, as represented in postcolonial literature.

In this regard, the pioneering works of innovative writers depicted female characters as subjugated and submissive. However, these were followed by the contributions of a new generation of female writers, whom Magu refers to as literary foremothers (2014), that accentuated the resilience, toughness, elegance, energy and faithfulness that are part and parcel of women. This thus marked the beginning of change led by women. As Sotunsa says, the works of African women represent a radical shift. Writers such as Mariama Bâ, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Buchi Emecheta pioneered a protest against the stereotypical images of women in literature and portrayed them as complex, autonomous individuals with the ability to resist and determine their destiny. Their works highlight the multi-dimensional nature of female identity and reflect the struggles and triumphs of women across the postcolonial world, Mague states:

> The unfavorable portrayal of women by African male writers ignited a literary outburst which culminated in female writers attempt to counter the impaired picture of African womanhood by reversing the roles of women in African fiction written by men. African female writers began to present female protagonists who are pitted against all odds yet emerge liberated and determined to exist with or without the man. (Sotunsa, 2008, p. 83-84

The self is a major area of study in the research on identity representation in postcolonial women's literature. The study of self-esteem and self-concept is particularly relevant in the position of women from former colonies in postcolonial settings. This is because self-related characteristics such as self-esteem, self-concept, and racial identity are highly discussed in the context of postcolonial literature. Indeed, much of contemporary literature suggests that the problems of self-identity and the construction of personal identity are central to many of the issues women face in such societies (Patterson, 2004).

Self-concept refers to the beliefs and understanding one has about oneself. The way a person thinks about the self is very much a product of cultural background and socialization experiences. Cultures can be described in terms of their tendency toward an independent or

interdependent self-concept. In this context, socialization is a lifelong process in which individuals learn appropriate ways of behavior expected of them by society, hence enabling them to take part in social life. Women in Kenya engage in a comprehensive process of understanding cultural values, practices, legal systems, and modes of expression, all of which play a significant role in shaping their identities. Through this process, socialization thus plays a significant role in determining how individuals create and define their identities. In another examples, in her work on *Black Women's Identity*, Collins (1986, 1999) theorized in her Black Feminist Thought (BFT) that the experiences and identities of Black women are complexly interrelated; their socialization must be understood in the broader social structures within which they live. The socialization of Black women is defined by both gender and race (Brown et al., 2017).

Identity development in women is the complex navigation of multiple, intersecting marginalized identities within their collegiate environments (Porter, 2017; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). This discussion therefore assumes that socialization represents a reconceptualization process of reconstructive identity for African women; it is a method through which both individuals and concepts are reshaped to ultimately facilitate a complete rejection of patriarchal structures. This mode of socialization, envisioned as a process of liberation, is central to the chosen texts in that it nurtures the rise of women and their communities.

The concept of women's selfhood pertains to their holistic understanding of individuality, self-centeredness, capabilities, conduct, and character (Maina, 2006). In any study of selfhood, it is imperative to seek out various perspectives on the female self, commencing with the patriarchal perspective. Rivkin and Ryan (2004) believe that patriarchal ideologies serve to marginalize women's voices, distort their experiences, and diminish their concerns to a secondary status to the point where "to be a woman. [is] in some respect not to exist at all" (p. 765).

The fact that postcolonial societies are patriarchal and have, for the most part, repressed the agency of women through marginalization requires recognition and empowerment of voices to depict their lives objectively. Women provide essential narratives of experiences in their quest for identity, most of those experiences that significantly influence the most immediate and enduring aspects of women's lives as both women and citizens. They aim to contest dominant ideas and attitudes that marginalize them and promote a reevaluation and reconstruction of their identity.

Gilbert and Gubar (2004) argue that for all artists, the process of defining oneself must come before any attempt to assert one's identity: you cannot express the creative "I AM" unless you first know who the "I" is. For women artists, however, this journey of self-definition is especially complex, as they face numerous patriarchal forces that stand between them and their true selves (p. 812). It is important that women identify themselves to understand who they truly are and accept this uniqueness. This is considered the foundation of their Declaration of Independence and their "I AM," which declares the right to live their lives authentically and take their place within society. Women take an important step with the pronoun "I" towards autonomy and self-determination.

Identity can be seen as a response to one's social environment (Baumeister & Maraven, 1996). Identity refers to the self-defined aspects, such as social roles, reputation, values, and potential. Social identity encompasses aspects of one's self-concept related to gender, sexual orientation, age, and ethnicity. The process of forming an identity starts at birth and continues throughout life. For young girls, their sense of self, ethnicity, and race are shaped primarily by family and community during socialization (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). As children develop socially and cognitively, they shift from understanding themselves based on external traits to recognizing more internal, complex, and context-dependent factors. African children, for example, begin to understand racial categories and the cultural associations and biases related to gender, race, and ethnicity (Dell et al., 2002).

Especially in rural areas, restrictions imposed by patriarchal governments often dictate how postcolonial women create their identities as they grow from girls into adults. These women are often faced with the painful realization that their identities are restricted to roles assigned to them by husbands, with their most basic functions being those of mothers and laborers. In such cases, women are not considered entirely independent individuals; they are regarded as the property of men, and their worth is measured by how well they can manage the household and the needs of their husbands. Since women are described more by their husbands' professions than by their distinctive features, this social setup does not allow them to retain much of their identity.

In most postcolonial countries, people are still fighting over issues like gender, identity, commodification, and class. There are still gender differences in many communities today. As such, these differences in many communities are strongly rooted in culture and will stay that way

unless there is a concerted effort to change how men and women are taught to interact with each other. At the same time, conceptualizing the female self and identity is a very important problem that cannot be stressed enough, especially for women in these societies. The concept of colonization and, thus, the subsequent dividing up of lands was actually to improve some economic or social condition; yet, the post-effects were quite terrible, with widespread effects still influencing uncolonized societies.

Moreover, women suffered more since they were also oppressed by colonization in addition to the traditions of patriarchy in postcolonial countries. For instance, Ashcroft et al. (2007, p. 93) cite that sexism and colonialism both control the people they rule over in similar ways. It was an ideology that feminist critics describe as "double colonization," a process when women are subjected in colonial societies "both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women" in countries ruled by men (p. 95).

Throughout decolonization, postcolonial subjects wish to free not just their countries but also regain their traditions. Once there is independence, the process of postcolonialism starts, whereby there is a need for intensive evaluation of what was left by the indigenous people in terms of their original cultural identity. At this moment, there is an initiation of critical study of this newly constructed identity, which has been previously studied and reconstituted. The search for identity and the valuation of this new identity are major themes in postcolonial literature. For instance, according to Sikweyiya et al. (2020), patriarchal beliefs have led to the widespread abuse of women in postcolonial societies. The forms of abuse include sexual, physical, mental, and verbal violence. Oppression is the systematic infliction of harsh or cruel control over an individual or group. Few women have been able to break away from this norm and create an independent livelihood for themselves, even though this has been a common inequity in postcolonial contexts.

A woman may face exclusion from her family and society at large if she chooses to resist and defy tradition. These women's experiences are often very distressing because they hinder the development of their identity. There are constant struggles between class, commodification, gender, and identity. Such is the case with gender divides in many postcolonial nations, where cultural convention and educative approaches to people interactive and perpetuate these social divisions. While such cultural traditions remain in everyday interaction, these divisions will likely continue.

In recent women's writing, considerable attention has been paid to themes of female identity and selfhood within feminist literature. In postcolonial societies, women are faced with a variety of complex and often unexpected challenges and the ideas of selfhood and subjectivity have been central to feminist discourse since the inception of the field. The relevance of these issues extends to basic questions of personhood, the body, social relations, and agency ,every aspect in which feminism must continue to invest. As Simone de Beauvoir said, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other" (cited in (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 1); the importance of the self within feminist thought is underlined to show how identity construction impacts gendered experiences within these societies.

According to Bergoffen and Burke (2020), the "Other" denotes an individual viewed as being essentially an object and a non-subject, basically a non-agent. This idea has been very critical in women being viewed as the "Other" within postcolonial literature and society . selfhood of women has been continuously marginalized or completely denied through legal systems, customary practices, and social stereotypes. Throughout history, women have often been seen as inferior companions to men or as their complete opposites, often defined by their purported differences from men; in either case, these have served to devalue and marginalize women (Ebila, 2015; Amaefula, 2021). Furthermore, there still seems to be a belief that male voices dominate the literary production process, silencing the voices and experiences of women. for example, Ogundipe-Leslie, 2002, questions thus: "Are African women voiceless, or do we fail to seek out their voices in the spaces and forms where these voices exist?" (p.139). Many male writers dismiss this question as an accusation that women are merely seeking attention.

For instance, the patriarchal relationship between the Kenyan government and its female citizens has historically required silence and humility in response to oppression rather than encouraging resistance or protest (Ebila, 2015; Hunt, 2014; Mellor, 1996; Griffin, 2016). This represents how the state views itself in a structurally gendered frame that apparently includes women, yet at the same time excludes and silences them from being active in the processes of questioning the way society is run.

1.6. Postcolonial Feminism: Voices, Critiques, and Contexts

Initially, it would be relevant to provide the theoretical framework for the notion of feminism and its historical movement. Feminism has entailed a series of political, cultural, and economic movements that aimed at guaranteeing gender equality and ensuring legal rights for women. Historically, feminism has been divided into three major waves. The first wave, which began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, started in Britain. This movement was focused on women's basic rights to education, career opportunities, and the right to vote, as well as being treated as equals to men.

The second wave, which ranged between the 1960s and the 1980s, expanded its focus towards advocating free expression over different mediums. However, these were mainly individual concerns regarding white middle-class women in life and society. For the apparent limited perspective, they garnered certain criticisms. In these cases, feminism was mostly known as essentialist as there is a belief in unity based on the assumption that it deals with a uniform notion of womanhood within every society and culture.

The third wave can be said to be a development in the 1990s that arose from or was an outgrowth of, the limitations posed by the second wave. It is ongoing to this day. Third-wave feminism was a critical assessment of the definition of femininity by earlier movements, which essentially represented, and often overly represented, the experiences of upper-middle-class white women. This is a much more inclusive perspective, taking into account the complex interrelationship of gender, race, and class in this contemporary movement.

Situated within the third wave of feminism, Post-colonial Feminism is the leading concern of this discourse. Very often, the term has been used interchangeably with Third World Feminism. The hybridity of the terms "postcolonial" and "woman," as Sara Suleri phrases it, "the marriage of two margins" (p.273) to mean the conjunction of postcolonial and feminist discourses has raised much debate among scholars and feminists owing to the fact that it is a counter-discourse. This discussion critically unpacks and deconstructs the imperialist implications of Western feminism. Suleri asserts that "the association of postcolonialism with woman, however, almost inevitably results in the oversimplifications that underpin uncritical accolades of oppression, transforming the racially female voice into a symbol of the 'good'" (p.273). This statement identifies the complexities of post-colonial feminism, which has begun a remarkable shift in the history of

feminist theory. Historically, the feminist movement has been led by middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. The more recent post-colonial feminism is supported by women of all racial backgrounds, offering an alternative perspective. It emphasizes the need to amplify the racially female voice, which is an appeal to the importance of racial identification within feminist discourse.

The debate brings to light the two most important postcolonial feminist theorists who have been very instrumental in the development of postcolonial feminism. Gayatri Spivak's widely discussed article, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* popularized the concept of 'double colonization,' an essential aspect in the theory of postcolonial feminism. Ashcroft et al. state that the term "double colonization" referred to the two-fold subordination of women in colonized societies by imperial and patriarchal ideologies emerged as a catch-all term in postcolonial and feminist discourses during the 1980s (p.250)

Regarding *Can the Subaltern Speak?* being from the Third World, Spivak speaks to the struggles of Indian women at the hands of the ideological constraints of colonialism and patriarchal rituals such as Sati or the self-immolation of widows. This tension is articulated by Spivak, who states:

> Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of women disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'Third World Woman', caught between tradition and modernization (p,102).

As the quote indicates, women in countries that have been colonized are doubly oppressed. This essentially muzzles their voices. "What Spivak uncovers are instances of doubly-oppressed native women who caught between the dominance of a native masculinist-imperialist ideology, intervene by 'unemphatic, and subaltern rewriting(s) of the social text of Sati-suicide,'" (p,36), according to Benita Parry, who takes Spivak's argument further.

In conclusion, Spivak argues that a Third World woman, in asserting her identity, should say, "I am a Third World woman," and not just a woman. By claiming her racial identity, she aligns her common experience of sexual oppression with women globally. She asserts the added weight of racial oppression, a form of oppression that only she and not all women, especially white women, suffer from.

With Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty has emerged as a seminal thinker within the field of postcolonial feminism. In her seminal piece entitled *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, Mohanty probes Western feminist theories on the grounds that they have poorly encompassed and theorized Third World women. She further deconstructs the way the Western feminist discourse represents "the Third World woman as a singular monolithic subject" (Mohanty.p,262). In this context, Mohanty questions whether the assumption that Third World women are a coherent homogeneous group has been one that disregards certain important social, cultural, and individual differences. She also argues that Western feminist theories often treat women "as an already constituted, coherent group with a common interest and desire" (p.261) without considering significant differences like class, ethnicity, race, and geographical location and without problematizing the experiences associated with these positions.

Consequently, Mohanty launches a serious critique of Western feminist theories' universalizing tendencies. These theories tend to homogenize Third World women into one category and, in so doing, overlook the complex and multifarious nature of their individual experiences and the specific social and cultural contexts in which they live.

Therefore, instead of using reductive generalizations, a more successful theoretical model has to be highly specific to the context in order to take into account the unique situations of individual women and groups of women (Mohanty.p,263). This should be a framework that recognizes the differences and divergences in addition to the commonalities in women's lives. Theories also have to emanate from women's own lived experiences. For example, when considering widows, we realize that we hardly have any idea about their lives or whether they are suffering or not .

Parry counters Spivak's argument, using proof that women do have a voice and can speak, completely opposing Spivak's belief concerning their silence. She uses Chandra Mohanty's review of the Western feminist writings on "Third World Women," stressing how indigenous women are different in their unique situations. Parry argues that since there are a variety of social relationships that native women continue to negotiate through class, caste, and culture, and since they have left marks in various domains that they impacted, such as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, craft persons, and artists, remnants of their voices might be found. In such a context, Parry proposes an amendment to the silent subaltern thesis enunciated by Spivak. Parry further argues that Spivak's theory represents an act of transcription of colonialism, thereby continuing "the

imperialist sovereign reign." According to Parry, Spivak's model converts the native subject into another type of subjectivity, one of otherness and subalternity, which in turn renders the colonized incapable of speaking for themselves. (Parry. p,37).

1.7 Core Features of Postcolonial Feminism: Diversity, Critiques, and Resistance

Postcolonial feminists have explored the relationship between Western women and women from non-Western cultures. Western women spoke out against the rights of other women. They highlighted the socio-cultural practices of sati, veiling, and restrictions on other women that were nothing but another kind of patriarchal domination. European women in the colonies of Africa and India advocated for the rights of indigenous women. The extent to which their campaigning enhanced the well-being of Indigenous women is up for debate. The works of Chandra Mohanty and Hazel Carby, mainly *White Women Listen!,* established the basis for criticizing Western feminism for neglecting the cultural disparities among women. This critique has since become a central component of postcolonial theorization.

The notion that the advancements made by women in the Western world are automatically superior to women in other regions has faced significant criticism and scrutiny. The idea of rescuing women from non-Western areas by well-meaning Western feminists was strongly objected to.

1.7.1 Heterogeneity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Western feminists examine women as a socially constructed uniform category that includes individuals from different races, social classes, and cultures. However, women are equally active participants in shaping their history. Consequently, women's encounters are shaped not just by their gender but also by the particular circumstances of the historical contexts in which they reside. Due to the influence of different periods and cultures, it is not feasible to generalize and claim that all women have shared experiences, issues, or features. Although a sexist perspective may categorize women as feeble and driven by emotions, the notion of women as 'sisters in struggle' could inadvertently portray women from developing countries as lacking power, being exploited, experiencing sexual harassment, and desperately requiring rescue. Multiple factors contribute to powerlessness. Postcolonial feminist philosophy challenges the dichotomy between the dominant Western world and the marginalized non-Western world. Feminists such as Chandra Mohanty

highlight women's non-homogeneity (heterogeneity) as a response to the tendency of Western feminist theory to generalize women universally.

Postcolonial feminism is concerned with the critical issue of differences and fault of exclusion, which leads to no development of a standard, diversified language that men and women could understand. Postcolonialism mollifies difference; it studies the experience of marginalized groups and the co-existence of several identities. It challenges the very premise of universalizing principles and norms. *Orientalism* is a Eurocentric generalization of Edward Said. Representations of the East by the West are brought within critical gaze and stripped of their faults and distortions. The questions also underline that this plurality of experiences, pivoted around women but differentiated by divergent cultures and traditions, must be affirmed. They also pinpoint even the need to review culturally and religiously prescribed codes that do not hold any valid scope in modern times. Postcolonial feminism will, therefore, strive to decide whether women can enjoy their right to claim ownership over their culture in the first place.

1.7.2 Binary Colonization of Women

Postcolonial theory challenges the notion of women being universally and uniformly defined, and it also critiques the lack of notions like race and class. The unifying theme of postcolonial literature can be identified as the role that females play in developing societies and nations. The patriarchy and colonialism have many similarities, not to mention the fact that these distributive forms of power cut across each other. Postcolonial feminist literature considers the symbolic and functional participation of white women in the colony. Double colonization is the process when women of colonized countries have double colonization, first because of their race and then by their gender. It also works on the problems of women of postcolonial society who belong to marginal groups like indigenous minorities, chronically oppressed.

1.8. Third World Feminist Discourse

The analysis of post-colonial studies leads to the creation of post-colonial feminist theory. However, western feminism fails to incorporate the critical history, political, and socio-cultural experiences of black or third-world women into its application of feminist theories. It generalizes the same type of oppression for all women. Furthermore, it fails to provide a universal definition of feminism that encompasses women of all races, whether they are white, black, or of color. The

white middle class exercising authority in defining and delimiting the term womanhood with their personal experiences as though it was the universal truth for all women has been heavily criticized. In her work, bell hooks argues that white women dominating the current discourse on feminism often fail to reflect on whether their idea of women's experiences is representative of real-life experiences among women. The available version of post-colonial feminism, therefore, insists that women from the Third World suffer a double bind of oppression from the empire's colonial rule and male dominance within patriarchy.

Regardless of the harmful impact of colonialism or an individual's actions, they find themselves ensnared in a dilemma that hinders their freedom of movement. Post-colonial Feminist Theory examines the interplay between colonialism, neo-colonialism, and postcolonialism about nations, social class, race, sexuality, and gender in people's lives at different levels. McClintock expounded on various analyses of gender-related issues. She added :

Imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of gender power. Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather gender dynamics were from the outset fundamental to the maintenance of the imperial enterprise. (McClintock.1995,p.17)

Anne McClintock, in her quote, gave evidence that gender dynamics had been an integral part of the functioning and sustenance of imperialism rather than something additional. According to her, the dynamics of gender power were as constitutive as those of race and class in maintaining imperial authority, from political governance to cultural beliefs. McClintock recognizes gender as a basic unit of imperialism, which counters conventional views that are limited to race and class, bringing a more subtle and variedly textured view of empire mechanisms. This perspective reveals how imperialism relied on a gendered ideology to solidify hierarchical positions and perpetuate their rule over colonized groups.

While Spivak opens the floor for women in discussing postcolonial theory, postcolonial feminism finds its best exposition in Chandra Talpade Mohanty's article *Under Western Eyes* in 1995. The essay was essential in clearing out the mist covering the brilliance of post-colonial women. It is thus crucial to criticize Western feminism for being complicit in the "naturalisation" and aggregation of all forms of women's subjugation under various patriarchal systems of control. Mohanty (1995) declares that "it is in this process of homogenization and systematization of the

oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of recent Western feminist discourse, and this power needs to be defined and named ……" **(p.75)**

Thus, postcolonial feminist theory provides well-formulated challenges to ideologies about the specificity of white middle-class women as humans. The unique space it creates allows for reconsidering the experiences of marginalized and silenced women. In this context, literature becomes a strong tool for subverting dominating discourses and rendering an outlet for self-expression and, as a consequence, an avenue toward empowerment of 'underside' voices.

Literature is a means of empowerment; it breaks the chains masculine sensibility sets forth. Through literature, women can find the strength to break free from the imprisoned walls set by men. Words can inspire women to explore the hidden depths of their suppressed voices in a way that suits them and to advocate for establishing a legacy that aspires to possess the same powerful wisdom and intelligence as men. Both feminist and postcolonial literature serve as representations of the struggle, empowerment, and consciousness-raising experiences of women. They serve as a platform for discussion and expression for the genuinely oppressed, marginalized, and silenced groups that individual works of literature represent. They actively participate in the discourse on humanity, asserting a shared experience that no one can avoid. These works address various issues such as gender, class, race, hierarchies, and sexuality.

According to Bill Ashcroft et al. (1995), both early feminist theory and nationalist post-colonial criticism aim to restore marginalized groups in the face of the dominant ones. They view this as reversing the structures of domination, even though it involves replacing a male-dominated canon with a female tradition or traditions. Postcolonialism and feminism have focused on the depth of the redefining process and its scope.

Representation and language go hand in hand in shaping one's identity. They are also critical in shaping one's subjective experience. They are essential for challenging and opposing existing norms and forms of female subjugation and control. Lazarus (2006) highlights that feminist and post-colonial theories address issues about representation, voice, marginalization, and the interplay between politics and literature. Daring female authors bravely and resiliently strive to liberate their genuine voices, motivating all women to empower themselves by dismantling the limited narrative of "innate masculinity." The experience of postcolonial women differs in that they have stories of their own to be told and are not just victims of colonization like the men. She

remains confined inside apparatuses of oppression and patriarchy, veiled by ignorance and disregard of sexist societies who keep her always curtailed to the role of a weak, inferior, and impotent agent. Postcolonial feminist literature focuses on the struggles of women in their quest to achieve freedom and liberation in societies that have discriminatory acts against them. It also looks at the women's attempt to retain their authentic selves and preserve historical and cultural heritage. Women have been considered, just like the colonized people, as 'the Other' in many geographical areas. They have been marginalized; they have been objectified as sexual beings and placed on the borderline between human and animal.

Postcolonial feminist literature symbolizes women's fight against a lengthy tradition that has portrayed women as animals, causing uncertainty and despair. The stories of the innocent accurately portray their enduring influence and defiance, which remain alive, acknowledged, and radiant in the aftermath of their pursuit of self-governance, freedom, and autonomy. Additionally, their unwavering dedication and awakening to the realities of their oppressor's violence persist as they continue to resist tyranny and male dominance until their final moments. Despite facing marginalization and silence, these women never lacked influence or the conviction of their freedom, and they consistently imparted valuable lessons on the profound capacity of human action. Here, women are marginalized due to their dual status as both ancient colonial subjects and women. Thus, this circumstance will undoubtedly offer individuals a fresh perspective on the postcolonial movement, as the cultural dimension is crucial in disputes among individuals of diverse backgrounds and between the sexes (females and males). These led women to question their identity.

While the term identity is usually used to refer to that unique mix of emotions, beliefs, and traits distinguishing one individual from the rest, it is also important to realize that there is more to the definition of identity than whatever sets people apart. Indeed, people can be recognized based on commonalities like religion, race, language, culture, or belongingness. Therefore, identity can be formed by either homogeneity or heterogeneity. Identity, on the other hand, is a construct that attaches dignity, pride, or honor to social categories in an implicit manner.

However, the paradox of the term identity becomes more widespread when it is used to describe women. In Carolyn Heilbrun's courageous work, *Reinventing Womanhood*, she demonstrates that the perplexity surrounding female identity arises from its dependence on male

definition. Heilbrun argues that successful women are often seen as products of male influence or as having a strong identification with male characteristics. She strongly criticizes this notion, asserting that it hinders women from establishing their own identity independent of men (Heilbrun, 1979). Therefore, women must be characterized by one another.

For women writers and feminists, quest for Identity seems to be defined the central preoccupation of nineteenth-century women's writing as the women's quest for self-definition. Elaine Showalter perceived it as a quest for self-discovery and Identity. Feminists have defined women's Identity in terms of the collective and shared experiences that bond them together in their struggle against oppression and society's hatred towards women. Women envisioned living in societies free of male domination, sexism and patriarchy as the ideal future while holding onto the female body as a symbol of resistance, survival, and a source of power, self-confidence, and authority. It meant discrediting old ideas and views that objectified them as beings of disregard and marginalization, grasped between the claws of both humans and animals.

There are two options that female use while seeking to develop her identity: either conforming to conventional norms or deviating from them. Norms determine whether one's behavior is considered acceptable or unacceptable. Therefore, identity creation involves either adhering to or diverging from social norms and consensus. There are two types of conformity. One is compliance; the other is private acceptance. The first refers to conforming to the norms without necessarily adopting the accompanying attitudes solely due to pressure from the group. The latter is compliance both in terms of opinion and behavior.

The research of psychologist Erik Erikson during the 1950s heavily influenced the concept of identity. He strongly asserts that there is a significant distinction between the two genders. Consequently, they have distinct responsibilities to fulfill and perform within the culture. Feminist theorists vehemently reject and refute this notion, asserting that the disparities between sexes stem from distinct societal expectations, varying exposure to the world, and reinforcing mechanisms. They argue that Erikson lacks awareness or consciousness of the significant influence of cultural factors on gender roles. They primarily emphasize the significant similarities between men and women rather than focusing on their differences. Empirical evidence shows that we now expect women to autonomously and unrestrictedly fulfill numerous roles and responsibilities with men.

The girls who actively embraced the Women's Movement and dedicated themselves to the cause saw an increase in confidence, faith, courage, strength, and self-esteem.

Understanding female identity entails scrutinizing and evaluating how social, political, and personal establishments influence it. Furthermore, the environment in which individuals reside exerts a more significant influence and impact on their identity.

1.9. Overview of Feminism in Islam

The emergence of the term 'Islamic feminism' may be traced back to the 1990s, mostly in Western literature discussing women in Islamic societies and cultures. Although women-centric reinterpretations of Islamic texts have been present since the 19th century in Iran, particularly in the works of Bibi Khanum Astarabadi and Nazira Zain al-Din, the phrase 'Islamic feminism' is generally used to describe the efforts to bring about legal changes in the Islamic republic. Their objective is to provide improved conditions for Muslim women while remaining within the framework of Islam. Generally speaking, Islam encompasses a wide range of beliefs and practices. Other critics, including Hashemi and Homa Hoodfar, believe that there is more of a possibility of developing a better gender-sensitive approach to Islamic legislation. Islamic feminists advocate for the separation of law with the enforcement of religious and political control. (Mojab 2001).

The global status of women is a longstanding and still unresolved matter. The notion of "women empowerment," which has acquired prominence in contemporary society, originates from the historical context of Islamic civilization. In order to fully understand the concepts of women's rights, honor, dignity, and position in Islam, it is imperative to initially analyze the conditions they experienced before the advent of Islam. During that period, individuals were regarded as enslaved people, and their living conditions were often much more deplorable than those of animals. In ancient times, women were seen as inferior to enslaved people. They were deemed non-human but rather a distinct sub-species that fell somewhere between humans and animals. Still, this particular illness targeting women was common in the whole world.

In Babylonian culture, whenever a man killed someone, his wife would be executed instead. In Greek society, women were considered to be the cause of evil and sadness. In ancient Egyptian civilization, women were considered to be affiliated with the evil spirits. In some parts of Eastern Europe and India, if a husband died, then that individual's wife would be either

murdered or burned beside his body. Women in Arabian culture faced the same situation as women did in the rest of the world. When they were told that they had given birth to a baby girl, their faces turn black. They considered it a terrible sign and curse. However, Islam guarantees women freedom and rights. Islam equals gender equality because it gives women equal rights, status, and opportunities just like any other walk of life, at home or in society. In fact, in the Quran, one of the primary contributions of Islam to the cause of the rights of women was its affirmation that both men and women are equal in the eyes of the all-powerful Allah. It is Islam that gave dignity to women, which was previously absent in a male-dominated culture in which they were not even considered equal to animals and rejected all those who came before for considering women a curse or bad sign. Islam promotes the idea that men and women have the same heritage, being descendants of Adam and Eve. Consequently, both genders are entitled to receive fair and equitable treatment. Islam ensured equitable treatment, equal entitlements, and equal recompense for both individuals. The Quran and Hadith contain several instances where both almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) issued commands or made promises, treating them with equal importance.

The first calls to liberate Arab women were in the late 18th century, at the height of the Arab Renaissance. Those who are critics of the liberation of women say that feminism is foreign to Arab culture and was brought with the help of French and British colonialists, who caused Western intervention in the Middle East. Nevertheless, studies pinpoint that the adopted and adapted Western paradigms in the Arab culture are viewed as the source of cultural feminism; one ignores the fact that the ideological shifts can also reflect indigenous social changes. When it is remembered that the class conflict and social transformations of that time were present, the fact that Arab feminism had been rejected within its culture is evident.

There is a widespread belief that Islam is a religion that was revealed 1,400 years ago and which has since been spread throughout the world. However, the overwhelming majority of Muslim women, if not all, because of the culture of their countries, are still embroiled in highly controversial or bitterly fought battles for asserting their rights in the private and public spheres of their respective cultures. The act of seeking and asserting the right to interpret Islamic religious texts is a significant aspect of the activity of many Muslim women today, both individually and

collectively, in groups or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The challenges faced by these women have been more prominent, increased, and broadened, particularly in the past thirty years.

Many historians and authors have overstated the case for Islam and have credited it with emancipating women in 6th century Hejaz, or Arabian civilizations with a variety of rights that were unheard of in other societies or parts of the "Western" world, till the late 19th or early 20th centuries. However, even in the current era, Muslim women continue to endure discrimination, various forms of injustice, and even direct acts of violence justified by religious beliefs. Islamic family rules that are discriminatory or unjust, together with punitive and violent rulings and behaviors and practices such as child marriages, lashing, stoning, and honor killings, are examples of the injustices imposed upon women in the name of Islam.

The historical development of feminism and feminist awareness in Muslim Middle Eastern countries indicates that these injustices may be attributed to evolving cultural norms regarding gender roles and relationships, which are influenced by significant socioeconomic or political transformations. These ideas may have been openly discussed or supported by women and some men in response to their firsthand experiences that were significantly changed by modernization, specifically as a result of colonial rule since the early 19th century.

The economic changes and state policies implemented by either an indigenous or colonial bureaucracy had significant effects on the lives of both men and women. These developments also led to cultural and ideological changes. A significant development for women was their emergence as a central topic of national discussion, actively participating in national affairs, shaping public policies, and influencing national narratives (Ahmed, 1992).

In Egypt, feminist discourses were initiated by both women (such as Nazira Zain al-Din, Huda Sha'rawi, Duriya Shafq, Nabawiya Musa) and men (such as Qasim Amin, Murqus Fahmi, Tahir al-Haddad, Ahmad Lutf al-Sayyid), but they emerged from distinct concerns and views. Men's pro-feminism, sometimes known as "feminist stands," emerged as a result of their interaction with European society and tended to be more prominent. Male proponents of feminism contended that their Arab society was characterized by a lack of progress due to the fact that women were not progressing, and women were not progressing due to a lack in education, the negative consequences of societal restrictions, and cultural traditions such as seclusion. These were not supported by religion, according to them. Women's feminism, which was confined to the

bourgeoisie class only, became a result of extensive education and personal exposure during times of high social change. Muslim women fought back, saying Islam guaranteed different women's rights, which were deprived of them because of 'customs and traditions' imposed in the name of religion (Badran, 1993)

Islamic feminism is the attempt to liberate women from oppression by employing the principles and teachings of Islam. Islamic feminism has gained acceptance within the Islamic community as it effectively supports Muslim women in their assertion that justice for women is inseparable from Islam.

1.10 Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Psychological Frameworks of Identity in Postcolonial Societies

Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalysis, which is considered one of the first theories in psychology. Psychoanalytic theory focuses mainly on activities at the very beginning of life. Theoretically, major and minor events dating back to infancy influence the mental and emotional state of being. These occurrences in adulthood had a profound impact on individuals' functioning, leading to the development of psychopathology, according to Freud. Freud postulated that an individual's psychosomatic discomfort, which refers to physical symptoms arising from psychological suffering, is an expression of internal tensions. The internal struggle frequently manifests in the subconscious, resulting in individuals being unaware of the occurrence of events and their subsequent impact on their current functioning. Freud and other psychoanalysts believed that exploring these subconscious experiences through talk therapy was the only method to address internal conflict in the subconscious and alleviate the individual's physical and psychological maladjustment.

Sigmund Freud's views on sexuality, gender, and the unconscious do relate profoundly to psychoanalysis and feminist discourses in the aspect of analysis in relation to the social construction of masculinity and femininity. In such a context, Freud's distinction between psychic and biological aspects of gender development, especially in his theories of the Oedipus complex and infantile sexuality, challenges essentialist views of gender with the predominance of cultural and social factors affecting sexual identities. According to Freud's model, the phallic stage is when children develop awareness of sexual differences, hence their masculine and feminine identities. In girls, this is characterized by penis envy, a process in which they realize their anatomical

differences and develop a desire for the father's symbolic masculinity. Penis envy has been highly criticized by feminist scholars such as Karen Horney, Joan Riviere, and Melanie Klein. They believe that Freud's approach makes femininity appear as a problem and reduces the complex relationships involved in gender identity to oversimplifications. In the end, Freud's ideas have informed feminist critiques of gender, but they have also spawned important revisions and discussions with regard to cultural, not biological, underpinnings for gendered experiences.

Some female psychoanalysts following Freud had different views from his ideas regarding gender and penis envy. He viewed penis envy as a part of normal development for girls, whereas Karen Horney, Joan Riviere, and Melanie Klein did not agree. In 1929, Riviere wrote an article showing how women, in a male-dominated world, often mask their masculine characteristics by acting more feminine to please others.

On the other hand, Klein opposed the theory of penis envy by Freud. According to her, a woman becomes feminine due to biological drives and the relation between a mother and daughter, not because she envies a penis. Horney said that Freud's view was too focused on men and suggested that men devalue women because they want to have children. This is called "womb envy." Later, Nancy Chodorow built on these ideas by focusing on the mother-child bond instead of Freud's focus on the Oedipus complex as a key part of a child's identity. Indeed, these post-Freudian thinkers succeeded in relocating the discourse on what makes a woman feminine from biological to both psychological and social factors.

Although Freud's psychoanalytic theory was important in providing insights into human behavior, it also introduced deterministic perspectives that gave little room for human potential or free will. This perspective was especially limiting when trying to understand gender and identity. In contrast, Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology, which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, attempted to fill these gaps. Maslow claimed that traditional theories, especially Freud's, overly concentrated on human misery and unconscious desires, overlooking the immense potential for growth and self-actualization that all humans possess.

Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emerged in the mid-20th century as an answer to two other theories: the psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud and the behaviorism brought forward by B. F. Skinner. Thus, Abraham Maslow established the need for a "third force" in psychology. With the help of crucial figure Abraham Maslow, a school of thought

of humanistic psychology began spreading during the 1950s, following the humanistic movement. It was popularized in the 1950s by realizing and expressing one's capabilities and creativity.

In order to realize the fundamental concept of Maslow's humanistic theory, which serves as the foundation of humanistic psychology, it is crucial to get insight into the origins of Maslow's development of this theory. By challenging the prevailing theories of Freud and Skinner, Maslow could articulate the fundamental principles of humanistic thought.

Maslow stated the following criticisms of the prevailing theories at that time. Firstly, Maslow thought that Freud's theory was deterministic as the latter explained human behaviour by reducing it to unconscious urges. Secondly, Maslow held the view that Freud and Skinner focused much on persons who had some psychological problems; that is, their theories were from a pathological view, hence not representative of all human beings. For Maslow, these other two theories put too much emphasis on humans' evil qualities and left aside, in the background, an immense potential that, according to him, humans have. Unlike others, Maslow was interested in the conscious mind, not the unconscious. He wanted to devise a theory that explains the process by which people can reach their full potential.

By contrast, Carl Rogers, one of the foremost exponents of humanistic psychology, grounded his theory in the thinking of Otto Rank, a student and fellow worker with Freud who broke with the Vienna master in the mid-1920s. Rogers' main goal was to ensure that his proposed developmental processes would at least provide more effective, although not radically new, personality. The second force was a derivation from Freudian psychoanalysis by psychologists such as Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson, Erich Fromm, Melanie Klein, Carl Jung, Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, and even Sigmund Freud himself. Maslow would later underscore, though not use the term, a "third force" in psychology. "It is as if Freud supplied us with the sick half of psychology, and we must now make a place for the healthy half," he said, a severe critique of psychoanalysis's alienating and distant style and its determinism about human nature.

In the late 1930s, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Clark Moustakas were some of the psychologists who felt the urge to delve into peculiarly human problems. Post-industrial society significantly upholds aspects of human existence such as self-actualization, health, hope, love, creativity, nature, being, becoming, individuality, and meaning. They aspired to form an

association to advance a professional psychology that concentrates on these facets of human existence.

Abraham Maslow is regarded as one of the founders of humanistic psychology. He is popularly known for his development of the Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which states that satisfaction with basic wants is instrumental in personal growth and self-actualization. Self-actualization, for Maslow, means being fully potent, that is, in realizing and using all of the organism's capacities.

In his theory, basic physiological and safety needs have to be satisfied first by a person before progressing on to the higher levels of psychological wants: belonging, esteem, and, finally, self-actualization. Maslow emphasized self-awareness and self-realization as being inseparable pieces of psychological development. His self-determination theory revolutionized this concept from a psychological point of view since, for the first time, the approach established free will and personal responsibility, thus viewing an individual as capable of creating their destiny. In contrast with the deterministic theories of behavior, the theory thus postulates that people have an intentional tendency toward advancement toward finding meaning and fulfilment. Maslow's ideas have influenced psychotherapy and counselling, as well as educational, organizational, and motivational psychology, in that these ideas encouraged people to focus on personal goals and self-improvement. Maslow's work greatly changed psychologists' thinking about human nature. It supported the idea that humans could naturally become what they can become with the right environment and conditions for self-fulfillment. (Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Psychology, 2020)
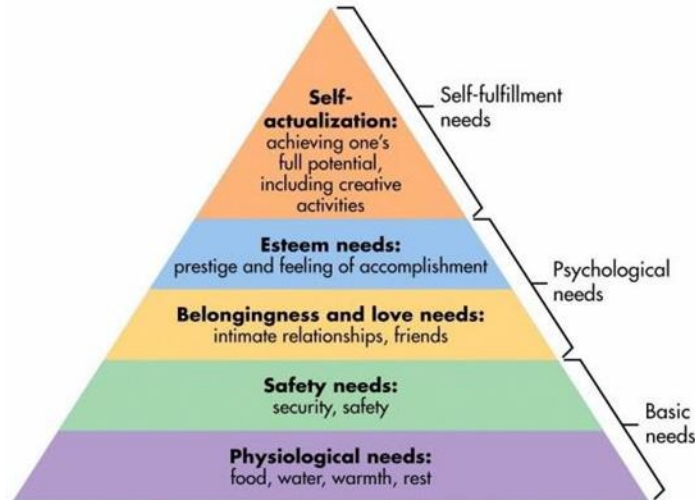
Figure 1. Maslow' Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid Source: (McLeod, 2007)

Maslow's notion of self-actualization of the fullest potential that is innate in a human being-naturally has to resonate with feminist themes on the aspect of individualistic empowerment and, therefore, also with self-determination, against which societal controls against women strongly exist. For Maslow, higher needs related to esteem and self-actualization can be striven for only after an individual satisfies the basic needs of safety and belonging. However, in women, society and culture come in the way of attaining higher levels of esteem and self-actualization since traditional gender roles can restrain self-esteem and personal growth. It is against such constricting structures that feminist theory criticizes; for any real self-actualization of women, psychological change is not enough and needs social change. It is by insisting on equal rights and opportunities that feminism secures conditions whereby women can fully pursue self-actualization, finally transcending the limitations imposed by gender inequality. In this respect, Maslow's theory offers a useful framework for understanding gender equality and its empowerment about issues of psychological development and realization by women to their fullest potential.

Another important scholar who delt with this subject ,Jacques Lacan, despite the fact that he did not view feminism in a very positive light, has greatly influenced modern feminist theory. His re-reading of Freud's ideas, particularly those concerning the Oedipal crisis, the phallus, and the symbolic order, has been of real significance to feminist thinkers. Lacan believed that femininity and did not derive from biology but were instead societal constructs connected with

the symbolic order, with the phallus being an empty type of signifier of power. The feminist theorists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous employed some strands of Lacanian psychoanalysis as vehicles for disputing patriarchal structures. Deconstructing binary gender oppositions, for example, Kristeva advanced that femininity and masculinity are fluid social constructs in an attempt to discuss both the pre-symbolic and symbolic realms. Irigaray used the latter when critiquing Freud's gender theory: he wrote, "A little girl is a little man," rejecting fundamentally that there are essential differences between the sexes.

Cixous, drawing from psychoanalysis and deconstruction, highlighted the pre-Oedipal bond between the girl and her mother. She advocated for *écriture féminine* as a kind of writing that resists the patriarchal structure of language and articulates a female voice. In engaging with psychoanalysis, these feminist theorists have employed Lacanian theory in ways that analyze the construction of gender and sexual differences in order to dismantle the eventual patriarchal systems which inform them.

It would also be relevant to examine the unconscious, symbolic, and psychoanalytic theories of gender, in particular, how femininity has often been constructed as a problem by Freud, post-Freudian theorists, and Lacan. It really set the stage for Simone de Beauvoir's important existentialist take on gender. Freud and Lacan discussed how gender and sexuality are connected to unconscious desires and societal symbols. They illustrated cultural mediation through mechanisms of repression and identification in the constitution of masculinity and femininity, whereas de Beauvoir presents a radical shift in biological determinism and psychoanalytic explanation.

With the rise of Existentialism in France, the idea of the self-shifted from being something one could find, as the classic Cartesian position held, to something that the individual mind could construct, with an emphasis on freedom and choice.. It is this existentialist change that greatly influenced Simone de Beauvoir, particularly in her feminist theory. De Beauvoir argued in her foundational work *The Second Sex* (1949) that gender can be explained the same as class or nationality, as a social construct rather than a matter of biological predestination, declaring that "one is not born, but becomes a woman." She espoused an existentialist viewpoint, which is that women learn to be women instead of being born as such. She attributed gender differences not to

innate biological processes but rather to social constructs designed to reinforce power relations. Such a view suggests that social factors, not biological traits, give rise to gender identity.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her book, *The Second Sex,* that one is not born a woman but becomes one due to certain kinds of social and cultural conditioning. She argued that the meaning of 'woman' is solely defined in relation to 'man.' This is an idea that gives great importance to psychoanalytic theory: the notion that our conscious selves, or subjectivity, are not an inherent and indivisible essence of humanist philosophy but are actually formed through our interactions with others.

Simone de Beauvoir's book is significant because it provides an analysis of how women are culturally constructed as the "Other." This analysis established the groundwork for many theoretical works in the 1970s. The appearance of the human female in society is not determined by biological, psychological, or economic factors. Rather, it is the collective influence of civilization that shapes this entity, which is considered to be feminine and falls somewhere between male and masculine. de Beauvoir contends that the concept of the Other is crucial in shaping human subjectivity, since our understanding of ourselves can only be developed by contrasting it with what is different from us. However, men have asserted their exclusive ownership of the category of Self or Subject, while relegating women to the perpetual state of being the Other. The concept of the category 'woman' lacks any concrete essence, as it is solely a manifestation of male imaginings and anxieties. However, as all existing cultural depictions of the universe, including those found in myth, religion, literature, and popular culture, have been created by males, women have also absorbed these conceptions and have learnt to "dream through the dreams of men."

Simone argued that women are often seen as "others." She added that the concept of the feminine must be defined as a result of the othering process. Arguments based on deterministic reasons provided by biologists, psychoanalysts following Freud, and Marxists cannot be accepted. What de Beauvoir is getting at here is that women's subjection cannot be taken as natural and permanent, for this is a result of social and cultural conditioning, which can be altered if only women become conscious and assertive of themselves. She concludes her argument that economic factors have given men certain advantages. Despite this, she encourages women to fight to gain those freedoms to be given the same rights as men.

De Beauvoir added that gender is socially constructed. Accordingly, she views that at the beginning of human history, men were regarded as physically and naturally stronger, so that they were better suited to physically demanding jobs like fishing, hunting, and fighting. Women's role was thus confined to the home front, with their major responsibilities being taking care of men's needs and childcare and domestic work. As a result, men enjoyed better freedom to establish social, intellectual, and political customs and patterns of thought. They invested their work, power, and time in laying the infrastructure for a new culture. Men established all Western cultural institutions and ran them solely as per their ideas, ideologies, and perspectives. Women, hence, were ignored and demeaned to a place of obscurity in society. She states, 'For him (man) she (woman) is the sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute-she is the Other." (1997.p,16)

De Beauvoir (1997) asserts that the structure of Western civilization primarily upholds and sustains patriarchal ideology, leading to the subjugation and marginalization of women. The persistence of patriarchal ideology over long periods predictably gave men the right and authority to insist on their traditional role, thereby maintaining women's subordinate status. Women themselves began to believe and accept this view of male superiority as if it were a standing system. This consequently leads men and women to contribute to the creation and perpetuation of patriarchy in society. This suggests that there may be no predetermined feminine character or essence. She asserts that women are products of civilization. According to her, "it is civilization as a whole that creates all beings" (De Beauvoir). In her same book, she expressed that woman experienced a sense of alienation from their bodies, confining them to the roles of wife and mother. De Beauvoir opposes the existence of any intrinsic essence in femininity but lays much emphasis on the fabrication, falsification, and conceptualization involved that reduced the female sex to a position of "other" in society. Afterwards, she continues with the following observation:

> They [women] have no past, no history, and no religion of their own. They live dispersed among the males, attached though residence, homework, economic condition and social standing to certain men, fathers or husbands-more firmly than they are to other women. If they belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women, if they are white; their allegiance is to white men, not Negro women

… The bond that unites her [women] to her oppressor is not comparable to any other. The division of sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history (1997.p,19)

De Beauvoir asserts that gender is a byproduct of social production. Furthermore, the connection between a woman and her body has also been associated with and delineated by wrong patriarchal beliefs and standards. Moreover, she posits that patriarchal society deliberately constructs the passive nature of the female body, not something inherited naturally. Therefore, these images emphasize gender preconceptions and prejudices. Men often regard the female body as a mere object, subjectify it to objectification. Consequently, patriarchal ideals consistently shape women's bodies, giving men exclusive control over societal equilibrium.

Finally, *The Second Sex* is still important to deal with when talking about sexism, women's subjugation, and the act of othering. Simone de Beauvoir gave women more power by letting them know that men saw women as objects of their cruel ideas. She starts her essay by saying that people should stop seeing men as exploiters and blaming them for being in charge. So, both men and women have contributed to oppressive ideas and beliefs throughout history by obediently following traditional roles that kept them at home. By putting on the mask of inactivity, women take on a huge amount of responsibility. They help build patriarchy and let its power settle in fertile ground, which is what they mean by "bad faith." She tells women that they can make a change for good in every field and everywhere if they speak out about how they feel about all destructive ideas.

Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the "Other" is an examination of the gendered oppression of women in patriarchal societies, whereas Frantz Fanon provides a similar investigation of otherness, shifting the focus toward race and colonialism. Whereas Beauvoir criticizes the historical position of women as the "Other" in relation to men, Fanon looks at how colonized peoples, especially Black people, are marginalized and dehumanized within the colonial system. He suggests that this racial "Othering" is not only confined to psychological and social concepts but actually is a violent, material reality deeply implicated within the colonial system.

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was an important figure in postcolonial studies and had a deep impact on the field well prior to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). His writing on psychology and anticolonialism offers sharp critiques of colonialism and its deep impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer. Fanon thus contended that Europe states its wealth and power from the

exploitation and suffering of colonized peoples, specifically the labours and deaths of Africans, Arabs, Indians, and others. He believes the colonial world is structured in a Manichean way, with the settler's world being opposed, in a binary manner, to that of the native. He emphasizes that both physical and psychological colonization creates a system that dehumanizes those who are colonized and alters their identity. Through Fanon's work, one can see the massive impact of colonialism on a psychological level: how it makes those who are colonized struggle with an identity made through violence, oppression, and a sense of being disconnected. The concepts that he puts forward about internalized oppression and racial alienation in colonized groups are of importance for the understanding of long-lasting emotional and psychological traumas, which stay in place even long after colonial systems have been dismissed.

Frantz Fanon, with his experiences during the independence of Algeria, investigated the deep psychological impact of colonialism, especially in the process of decolonization. He speaks of violence faced by the people of Algeria: torture, rape, and death, and he does propose that such colonial violence reflects deeper, aggressive, and racist anger that is part of the colonial system. Fanon's perspective, brought about by his experiences as a colonial subject during the height of decolonization, gave him a remarkably sharp view of the psychological and cultural trauma wrought by colonization. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the author looks at the challenges faced by colonized people in their struggle for identity, underlining the fact that colonial rule caused not just physical damage but grave psychological wounds as well. Fanon's work starkly expressed the suffering of the colonized people. It looked at the systemic violence that oppressed and isolated them while also exposing the psychological and emotional impact of colonial rule. His work is really important in conceptualizing how colonial violence dehumanizes people, especially in relationship-building and reclaiming culture.

Works such as *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (1959), and *Toward the African Revolution* (1964) have placed Frantz Fanon among the key thinkers around whom Marxist and psychoanalytic discourses on psychic and social injury in colonized contexts are elaborated. Fanon investigates the psychic pain brought about by colonial domination and its effects on individual and collective identity. Fanon was an active supporter of the "Negritude" movement-a cultural and literary movement with the main representatives of notable Francophone writers, namely Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léopold

Sédar Senghor from Senegal, and Léon Damas from French Guiana. It had set as its objective the affirmation of Black culture and heritage in the face of colonial oppression, challenging the racial hierarchy imposed by the colonial powers. Throughout, Fanon was critically engaging with Negritude so as to transcend its fixation on cultural pride and further advance toward a more radical, psychological resistance to colonialism.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon denounces Europe's fake humanity and the impossible life of the postcolonial elite, also known as the 'mimic men' bent on sustaining colonial oppression. Fanon combines Marxism and psychoanalysis to demonstrate that the psychic and economic issue of alienation in the colonial traditional is exacerbated by poverty and previous trauma. In the Preface, Jean-Paul Sartre points out that the book 'expresses the 'Third World' and that it lays the blame for the barbarities of colonialism at the door of the Europeans. Fanon's writings remain foundational to postcolonial studies today due in part to his unique insight into the cultural and psychological obstacles of the colonized in their struggle for independence and afterwards.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon dwells on the psycho-political complexity of black identity as an institution of colonialism to suppress the colonized ego and prevent them to reach their true self. In fact, Fanon's prophetic descriptions of the anticolonial nationalist struggle influenced revolutions with an emphasis on the volatility of mental connection.

Fanon also had an important perspective on the cultural aspects of the postcolonial experience. According to him, "native" cultural producers go through three distinct phases when relating themselves to the dominant colonial culture. First is the phase in which the native completely assimilates the colonizer's culture. The second phase consists of the identity crisis, which results in a rediscovery of their native roots. The third phase is the "fighting phase" of Fanon, characterized by the active fight of the natives for nationalist self-assertion. This phase is really different from the first phase of assimilation and emphasizes the need for revolutionary literature, as demonstrated in the writings of authors like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and others . Fanon's cultural framework has really influenced writers and critics from newly decolonized nations in the Caribbean and Africa.

Writings of liberation mark that period of increased knowledge and self-realization, a turning point when a strong anticolonial will is created. According to Fanon, independence is a

peculiar form of political freedom as it allows the colonized to reclaim their past in order to rediscover themselves as humans. Fanon writes about this process as a core part of the liberation story in *The Wretched of the Earth*, making it a key text for understanding this moment of change. According to him, the fight for independence of the country is actually a fight for freedom and independence.

Trauma in Fanon's work is closely related to his overall theory of liberation, which he describes as a process entailing both political and psychological elements. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon discusses how the colonized person experiences deep psychological trauma due in large part to racial alienation and fractured identity. He clearly explains how the colonized individual internalizes the colonizer's perspective and how this results in inferiority, where the body itself becomes a site of oppression, constantly reminding us of racial hierarchy. The trauma is intensified by the systemic violence of colonialism that not only physically oppresses the colonized but also destroys their identity and eradicates their cultural history.

For Fanon, trauma is not merely an event; it is an active determinant in the psychology of the colonized subject. The authentic discovery of the self, based on history, is highly crucial in the story of liberation presented by Fanon. He characterizes it as a moment of wake-up, what he calls the creation of an "anticolonial will." The awareness stemming from an understanding of dehumanizing experiences of colonialism is necessary for the colonized to restore the sense of being human. For him, the search for national independence from a psychological point of view is not a political issue. The struggle for autonomy and self-determination is concerned with the deep-seated effects of colonial trauma. Fanon connected resistance with psychological relief that is derived from the confrontation and surmounting of psychological injuries. This evidences show personal and collective traumas are linked with the journey of decolonization.

Like Fanon, Albert Memmi addresses the profound psychic consequences of colonialism, notably the suffering and sense of subordinateness that typified the colonized. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), arguably his most influential work, Memmi explores the colonial relationship in depth, pointing out the psychic dehumanization of colonizer and colonized alike but differently. According to Memmi, because of such a system of oppression, which alienates the colonized individual from their identity and instils an internalized sense of inferiority, the psychological pain of the colonized individual is immense. The colonized individual, perpetually

confronted with their racial and cultural inadequacies, internalizes such ideals, resulting in self-doubt, alienation, and a persistent sense of worthlessness.

This adopted trauma leads to a psychological rupture in which the colonized is set to grapple with reconciling identity with the derogatory outward perception set upon them by the colonizer. Memmi argues that the feeling of inferiority is not a state but, rather, a psychic effect of colonial oppression instigated by the systematic devaluation of the colonized by the colonizer. At the same time, the impact of colonialism does not stop on the level of the physical or political environments but deeply gets into psyches and spirits with long-lasting traumas.

While Fanon considers revolutionary violence to be the only effective means toward psychological liberation, Memmi holds a more nuanced view of how psychological healing can be affected. He notes that however much the trauma of colonialism is invested in deep-seated inferiority and dislocation of mentality, the path to its resolution requires more than simply an appeal to violent revolt.

Memmi insists that healing from colonial trauma would only be possible with a change in identity. The change should come in the form of the people regaining their humanity and cultural independence, which in turn shall fight the oppressive systems of colonization and the internalized feelings of inferiority. Memmi describes the complicated process of recognition, wherein the colonized should realize his or her worth, resist the colonial way of looking, and try to develop a new decolonized identity.

In the same vein, the colonizer has to grapple with the psychological distortion engendered by his or her assumed supremacy, realizing common humanity across the divide. While Fanon uses an optic that insists upon a sudden, violent rupture, Memmi conceives of psychological recovery much more in terms of a slow and transfiguring process through the return to culture and identity along with the modification of the colonial relationship itself.

Memmi adds further to the understanding of the psychic effect of colonialism by detailing the deeply ingrained interaction between trauma and feelings of inferiority and alienation in the postcolonial condition. His concern with psychic healing through mutual recognition and structural change in the colonial relationship supplies an alternative framework of investigation into the

psychological elements of colonial trauma and liberation, one that complements Fanon's more aggressive approach.

Both Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi discuss how colonialism affects identity and trauma, while the additional insight by Bell hooks investigates the complicated nature of oppression that arises from intersectionality based on race, gender, and class. Drawing on the work of Fanon and Memmi, who described feelings of inferiority and trauma among colonized peoples, hooks add to this a consideration of how colonialism and patriarchy combine in the added suffering of Black women. Whereas Fanon emphasizes the necessity of radical violence in the struggle for freedom, and Memmi points out the necessity of change within the structure, hooks presents an alternative view: It is only through radical self-love and reclaiming of identity through emotional strength that any true healing from the trauma of colonialism can take place. She explores how systemic racism, along with gender oppression and colonialism, dehumanizes people. She points out that the journey of liberation is not only political and ideological but also very emotional and relational.

In the feminist theory of bell hooks, the concept of the margin emphasizes the physical or social exclusion of certain groups, such as women of colour, and working-class women, in addition to the psychological effects derived from this marginalization. Women who cannot fit into this dominant feminist discourse, especially from historically marginalized groups, often disappear; their voices and experiences continue to be silenced. Such marginalization could lead to a real identity problem. So, these women are unable to perceive themselves in cultural accounts and feminist movements. Not getting validation and recognition can make them feel inferior. Internalized oppression acts as a strong psychological mechanism wherein marginalized women might unconsciously take on the negative stereotypes imposed by the dominant culture, which in turn deepens feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.

This doubt leads to identity crisis that becomes further complex and difficult because mainstream feminism is not really dealing with an intersectionality of race, class, and gender. Marginalized women are often excluded from the movement that is supposed to liberate them. Feeling the "other", the outsider or the one who does not fit can really shake up how someone sees himself or herself and make it difficult for them to claim a place in the world. hooks argues that this marginalization does not have to be the lived reality of these women. Through self-love, showing compassion to people who are marginalized, and fighting against injustice, these women

can reclaim their identities and begin to heal the psychological wounds created by oppression. Instead, they can work towards the attainment of empowerment. A genuine feminist movement, according to hooks, must center around such women. Only by centering the voices of the marginalized can feminism really begin to dismantle and tear down the structures of oppression that shape women's lives.

For those several forms of oppression that are mixed and that people have to face, especially women of colour, bell hooks uses the term double marginalization to describe the situation. They are oppressed as a result of their ethnicity besides their gender. This is different from people who are marginalized for one aspect of their identity and thus creates a more complex kind of oppression. Invisibility, isolation, and an unending fight to have one's voice heard within feminist and general societal discourses are only some of the psychological and social impacts of double marginalization.

1.11 Feminism and Womanism

The African American novelist Alice Walker introduced womanism in her 1983 book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. Black feminists primarily support this movement within feminism. Walker defined the term "womanist" in her 1979 short story *Coming Apart*. The word "womanist" is derived from the Black folk idiom used by mothers to describe to female offspring who exhibit mature behavior. The girl displays behavior which is considered to be beyond what is normally expected by society, and thus there is determination, bravery, and extreme actions. She continues a womanist is also

> Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility ... and women's strength. ... Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health ... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit ... Loves struggle. Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (Walker, 1982)

She used the term so that it went on gradually to accommodate diverse issues and opinions that black women and others have to face. According to Walker, "womanism" is accepting and embracing the bravery, loudness, and confident nature and attitude of women of colour and their affection towards other women, themselves, and all of humanity. Walker's coining of womanism

led to its expansion into various fields, producing concepts such as African womanism and womanist theology or spirituality. Womanism is a sociological theory based on black women's historical experiences and everyday lives. According to Layli Maparyan, the theory of womanism seeks to bring balance to the incoherence between human beings and the environment or nature and align life in the human experience according to harmony with the spiritual. (Phillips, 2006).

Although varied, womanist theory fundamentally asserts that white women primarily drive mainstream feminism to advance their interests, often disregarding or actively opposing the concerns of black women. Feminism alone does not automatically make white women free from racism, whereas womanism prioritizes anti-racism as a fundamental principle. Black women's existence is contingent upon women's empowerment and preserving black cultural values. From this perspective, it is necessary to critically analyze and contextualize the precise meaning of "the feminine" and "femininity."

Although third-wave feminism and intersectionality share the same concerns, they differ in terms of the centrality of intersectionality within their theoretical models. Under womanism, a prescribed ideology is one in which a woman's culture, rather than her social status or any other attribute, is the most central part of her identity that intersects with other factors. It underscores that a woman's culture shapes her identity, not just as a component. A woman's blackness does not contribute to her feminism. However, her blackness is the perspective through which she comprehends her feminist/womanist identity. (Gillman,2006)

Women from non-white backgrounds became more inclusive with the rise of second-wave feminism. However, white feminists equated this inclusivity with "colour blindness" and believed that gender issues should take precedence over racial issues. The inability of white feminists and non-white feminists to work out this division successfully was the main factor that prevented the two groups from building up a solid interracial movement. Consequently, third-wave feminism emerged to associate with these groups, incorporating such principles as intersectionality and womanism. The marginalization of black women in the more significant feminist movement has given rise to at least two quite different interpretations of the term womanism. Some womanists believe that feminists have traditionally approached blackness as a problem and, therefore, do not validate black women's experiences like they do their white counterparts." Womanists believe that the theory of womanism is not just an offshoot of the feminist movement, but rather another theory

that stands independent of feminist thought" (walker,1982). This represents a deviation from the mindset of black feminists, who have established their position within feminism by way of scholarly pursuits and social engagement. However, not all womanists subscribe to the above view that the womanism movement is different from feminism. Alice Walker summarizes the first concept of womanism by saying, "Womenism and feminism are as similar as purple and lavender." In this context, the concepts are very close, and womanism is more of an umbrella term under which falls feminism.

According to Walker, the concept of womanism is a broader aspect of feminism and directly implies that it ensures the survival of all human beings. The ideology does not dwell more on gender inequality but instead emphasizes other issues, such as race and social class, as causes of oppression. She views the theoretical framework of womanism as a social movement whose intentions are to ensure the survival and development of the black race. It encompasses experiences related to black women but includes much more, such as black culture, mythologies, spiritual practices, and oral traditions. Walker's quote, "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender," suggests that feminism is merely a subset of a larger ideology that womanism has crafted. According to Walker, a womanist is also a universalist. Walker further underscores the universal nature by using the metaphor of a garden, where all flowers flourish with equal significance. Women dedicate themselves to ensuring the survival of both genders and strive for the harmonious coexistence of men and women, enabling them to coexist without fear and maintain their cultural uniqueness. Black women have the opportunity to address gender injustice by including men rather than directly confronting men.

Walker's final definition focuses on the sexual orientation of the women she discusses in *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson.* In this essay, the author argues that "womanist" is the most fitting term for Rebecca Jackson, a black Shaker who elopes with her husband and has an affair with a white Shaker. This is because the term emphasizes an individual's relationship to the world, regardless of sexual orientation. Walker's diverging definitions of womanism work to validate African-American women's experiences while promoting a future-oriented perspective that is nevertheless based on those concrete experiences. Many of Alice Walker's descendants agree that, although she may have coined the term, Walker does not clearly define it and often contradicts herself.

She sometimes describes it as an expanded redefinition of black feminism, incorporating black women and a holistic view of womanhood. Despite her advanced age, she harbours a sense of remorse for her efforts to foster peace and inclusivity among women, particularly in light of the ongoing discrimination against black women. White women and black men consistently discriminate against women whose opinions they have never acknowledged.

1.12 Womanism in Africa

The word "Africana womanism" was first used by Clenora Hudson-Weems. When her book *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* came out in 1995, it shocked the Black nationalism group and made her known as a thinker who could stand alone. Hudson-Weems does not think that feminism is the religion of African women or women from the African diaspora because it is based on Eurocentric ideas. According to Hudson-Weems, another difference between womanism and feminism is that womanism is "family-oriented" and focuses on race, class, and gender. In contrast, feminism is "female-oriented" and only looks at biological sex problems that women and girls around the world face.

According to her, traditional views of African women cannot be included in the ideal of feminism, given the history of slavery and racism in the United States. Besides, she disagrees with the idea advanced by feminism that men are the enemy. She argues that it does not make any sense for African American women since they do not view African American men as the enemy. She says the masculine-feminine binary in feminism comes from the fact that women do not have problems apart from those created by their race or economic status since it was tailor-made for upper-class white women. The enemy remains to be the force that holds the African man, woman, and child down.

She also sets the African woman apart from black feminism by saying that black feminism is uniquely African-American, which in turn is uniquely Western. She asserts that black feminism is a component of feminism that requires the support of white feminists to ensure the visibility of black women's perspectives. According to her, feminism will never really accept black feminists and will instead push them to the fringes of the movement.

Ultimately, she writes that there will never be a dialogue between the matriarchs of the black feminist movement and the matriarchs of the feminist movement. Many of her work sounds

like Black Nationalist speeches focused on separation because she places the group before the person. Hudson-Weems distinguishes between Black Feminism, Walker's Womanism, and Africana Womanism.

In the context of womanist theory, theories refer to the fundamental concepts, convictions, and methods of thought that womanists employ to bolster their perspectives, actions, and individual beliefs. Understanding these ideas is essential to understanding womanism as a social and philosophical movement that focuses on the lives of black women and the more significant fights for justice, equality, and freedom.

In social and cultural studies, the concepts of identity and identification share similarities but remain distinct. Identity is considered the deeper and more detailed view of what a person or group is. At the same time, identifications refer to any labels or groups that use discourse to discuss parts of that identity. Identifications allow people to express and define their identities. Identities still need to be exhausted by identifications. Throughout history, the question of women's identity has been an argument and a debate, especially when one feels that the "identifications" do not capture the complexities of a person or group's identity.

As Layli Phillips writes in *The Womanist Reader*, Womanism does not have the black woman as its primary focus of interest; the black woman is the point of origin of womanism. Moreover, in Womanist Spring, the fiction writing seems heavy on activism. The fight for womanism has radicalized women to such an extent that it has extended beyond black communities to include non-white communities.

Some perceive womanism as a subset or component of feminism, while others contend that the actual situation is the opposite. Purple is to Lavender explores the idea that womanism and feminism relate, with feminism being a subtype or subcategory of womanism, in much the same way that Lavender represents a specific type of purple. "Purple is to Lavender," Dimpal Jain and Caroline Turner discuss their shared frustrations as women of non-white ethnicity in the faculty. Status engendered significant discrimination against them. Jain is South Asian; Caroline defines herself as Filipino. The authors introduce what they term "The Politics of Naming," which informs their use of the term womanism rather than feminism. Jain confesses that the word feminism is contestable, and she feels uneasy using the word. She states: "I knew that the term feminism was contested and that I did not like how it fit in my mouth. It was uncomfortable and scratchy, almost

like a foreign substance that I was being forced to consume as the white women continued to smile with comforting looks of familiarity and pride".

Turner expresses her perception of feminism as an external force. In other words, Turner feels a sense of alienation from feminism. Jain has highlighted that names are certainly not neutral but identifiers, and in the case of social movements, ideas, and even groups of people, there is excellent politics to naming. Naming and labelling become politicized activities when they create a basis for group membership, he states

The crux of the politics of naming is that names serve as identifiers and are not neutral when attached to social movements, ideas, and groups of people. Naming and labeling become politicized acts when they serve to determine any type of membership at a group level.

This comment proves that people can adopt feminism due to specific reasons. However, society may not easily recognize the reasons for this because feminism has a connotation of social movements, ideas, and vast groups of people. People need a form of identification that fully recognizes and validates their opinions. They need something that they can adopt in totality without a single hint of regret. Moreover, Alice Walker clearly states:

> I don't choose womanism because it is 'better' than feminism ... I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it... because I share the old ethnic-American habit of offering society a new word when the old word it is using fails to describe behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully see

To the external world at large, the majority of black women have not been able to identify with feminism as a movement that has adequately and holistically portrayed who they are as individuals. To achieve this new movement, they suggest a new form or system which they concatenate to a construct already in the control of existing powers. Womanism: Alice Walker When asked what it meant to be a womanist, Alice Walker said that she could not imagine herself not being a womanist - to her bones, it feels so right. Feminism does not. Moreover, a central piece to womanist return is the crucial roles that spirituality and ethics play in dismantling the threefold bond of groups on "race-ism," sexism, and class-ism that subjugate African American women's intersecting constitutive experience.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter has brought out the basic structure through the understanding of postcolonial literature and theory, underlining all the most important concepts: deconstruction of colonial ideologies, critique of dominant narratives, and the relations between postcolonialism, feminism, and identity. Theorists such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha have shaped this field with their critical comments on complex relationships between power, culture, and identity. In this respect, feminist scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Bell hooks have already contributed a great deal to such a discourse by investigating the interplay between gender, race, and colonial histories.

Hence, the next chapter will actually discuss these theories and concepts as applied specifically to the analysis of *Efuru*, such an important postcolonial novel that stands very firm ground for analyzing much of what identity, gender, and cultural resistance would be in the themes. Therefore, this analysis is heavily based on that theoretical framework which has been set aside to argue how Efuru engages the legacy of colonial and patriarchal impositions. Therefore, this study will address postcolonial and feminist theory to interrogate the female experiences represented in the novel and to demand cultural identity negotiations in postcolonial Africa. Such notions as decolonization, hybridity, critique of "Otherness," and intersectionality are likely to clarify how identity is constructed and contested within the postcolonial framework.

Chapter Two:

Self-awareness and Self-realization in Efuru

2.1 Introduction

Many sociologists, anthropologists, and historiographers have discussed how African people lived and worked before the invasion of colonialism in the late 19th century as a way of understanding history and correctly appraising the worth of lives, especially women. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an elaborate description of the social structure that West African societies maintained before European colorization. It will look into some aspects of the social and cultural life of Africans, such as family structure, traditional rites, economy, religion, and political culture. The place of women in African society within these contexts will be given specific attention. Also, an analysis of how the European influence intervened drastically upon the cultures and communities of Africa will be contained here in the chapter. In the same vein, many African authors wrote about these circumstances that surround this period of time, and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* is the best example.

Efuru is a novel of contrasts, setting apart the bodily aspect of man on the cultural and personal identity in a post-colonial Nigerian context, standing as an ancestor of African literature. The novel narrates how Efuru does not behave according to society's expectations; hence, she starts the journey to self-awareness and self-realization.

This chapter highlights not only her resilience, but also her autonomy, and challenges traditional gender roles and colonial narratives by examining Efuru's transformation from self-awareness to self-realization. To enhance our understanding of Efuru's character, this novel clearly brings out important elements of feminism by blending them with aspects of postcolonialism, highlighting its significance in both African and global literature.

2. 2 Women in Pre-Colonial West African Society: Family Structures and Gender Roles

Thinking about how gender and the structures of society were framed in precolonial West African communities could be deconstructive critique first from the language and then from within cultural frameworks. It upsets or challenges common beliefs in the universality of social organization and narrows down to how communities like the Yorùbá and Igbo functioned without Western binary gender categories.

This emphasizes the different cultural systems that existed before the colonial impact and provides one of the many ways in which African societies can be studied on their terms. Considering such

subtleties, the research not only demystifies myths but also brings into perspective the revolutionary impact Western ideology had on the civilizations of Africa.

Considering the long-established framework of Western societies and their continued existence in the present in comparison to the systems of African societies before colonization, this may lead to misunderstandings about the historical lifestyles and social organization in Africa before the arrival of colonialism in the late 19th century.

The topic has been rigorously researched by many anthropologists, sociologists, and historiographers, not only to understand the nuances of history but also to give due credit to the previously lived lives of various communities, mostly women and the West African community, before the invasion of European colonizers into their land. There are many researchers that seek to illuminate different aspects of African social and cultural existence, encompassing the intricacies of family arrangements, customary ceremonies, economic activities, religious convictions, and political frameworks, with a specific focus on the crucial role played by African women in these settings. Moreover, they highlight the substantial effects that European influence had on African cultures and society.

Sociologists focus their studies on the cultural elements of West societies in the precolonial period, especially with regard to the role and status of women in West African societies and Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí is one of them. Her influential work is about Nigerian gender and sociology, will be the central primary source of examination with respect to how West African societies functioned and were structured. The main reference will be her 1997 book, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Oyěwùmí does a great deal of research regarding the Yorùbá and Igbo society. As a sociologist, she wishes to conduct linguistic analysis and deconstruct narratives associated with gender roles. The intent is to prove that African cultures and societies have large amounts of influence from Western ideologies and interpretations. The concepts of the woman question and binary gender are from Western culture, and Yorùbá and Igbo languages do not have words or expressions for gender labels and categories. In this respect, her study was designed to revisit discourses on the construction of African and Western communities and cultures.

Her analysis of the concept of non-gender roles in Yorùbá society is of great importance. The Yorùbá society did not have a gender-based structure, resulting in the absence of social

distinctions between men and women. However, it was specifically through colonialism and the Western perspective that this model was introduced and deeply rooted. Building upon this concept, it may be inferred that the classifications of gender are a product of Western beliefs that have been transferred and seen as inherent and universally applicable concepts. Due to the absence of gender divisions, society was structured based on a distinct hierarchy known as seniority. The order of birth determines and governs interpersonal relationships. As Oyěwùmí asserts:

> Seniority is the primary social categorization that is immediately apparent in Yorùbá language. Seniority is the social ranking of persons based on their chronological ages. The prevalence of age categorization in Yorùbá language is the first indication that age relativity is the pivotal principle of social organization (p. 40.)

According to her view, the system of seniority clearly comes out in the language as the major factor in social categorization. The Yorùbá language does not have gender distinction; the names and pronouns distinguish between people of different ages in social relationships and do not distinguish males from females. In the Yorùbá Civilization, distinction is marked by social relationships and relations that are not biologically based, as in the West. What is obtained is a socially real differentiation. Biology and the body are not central to social interaction.

This observation reveals that Yorùbá society, like other West African societies such as Igbo, afforded both men and women the opportunity to hold significant positions in lineage hierarchy, political structures, economic pursuits, and religious practices.

This duality in the opportunities for influence and leadership among Yorùbá and Igbo communities reflects broader structures of organization that occurred across precolonial West Africa. Social organization in precolonial West Africa was characterized by the existence of both patrilineal and matrilineal structures. These underlying structures were founded on a hierarchy of seniority, and as such, it gave both men and women the right to assume influential positions, hold authority, and be leaders. Matrilineality is a cultural structure whereby one's ancestry and identity are passed on through the maternal line. It held that all the offspring belonged to a mother's line, thus forming a bloodline or social relationship with a common ancestral woman. On the other hand, patrilineality placed inheritance and lineal descent through the father's bloodline, with every descendant belonging to the father's lineage.

For instance, Jumanne Kassim Ngohengo has probed explicit details further in an ethno-archaeological study to explain the social dynamics and cultural practices involved in a context, as viewed in both the matrilineal and patrilineal systems, "traditional societies in Africa were largely matrilineal, they loved and protected girls but at the same time gave the defense duties to boys, exposing them to harsh nature environment that dictated the life of precapitalist communities" (p. 111.).

Anthropologist Niara Sudarkasa is one of the few scholars who believes that securing seats, functions, and privileges is more probable in a matrilineal social organization since women can be said to have had the upper hand compared to the patrilineal system, where men dominated despite women playing their part in decision-making and deliberations about the family. It is important to note that patrilineality does not necessarily mean patriarchy, since various studies have demonstrated that women in precolonial Africa were seldom oppressed.

The extended family's concern for women's roles is expressed through consanguineal and conjugal relations. Not only are women recognized as mothers and daughters, but also as wives and co-wives. This is an important differentiation because much of the Western literature on kinship groups typically refers to women only as wives and co-wives, excluding familial functions. Moreover, Western discourse overlooks the existence of polygamous unions and thus overlooks the great authoritative positions women can assume in certain marital configurations. In most West African societies, husbands and wives are found to have similar authority in their marital relationships, and hierarchical systems among kin are generally organized by seniority.

The majority of people in the West have grown up believing that traditional societies oppress women, while modern societies liberate them. On these premises, it has been assumed that European ideas and behaviors referred to as modern will free women from traditional African, Indian, or other non-European cultures. Yet, for each of the last few decades, several scholars in their works such as Ifi Amadiume, Chinweizu, *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy (1990), Sylvia Leith-Ross, African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria (1939)*, have shown this stereotype to be not only unwarranted but overwhelmingly untrue for Igbo women. More specifically, in traditional Igbo society, women enjoyed far-reaching autonomy in economic, political, and cultural terms. Igbo society was largely patriarchal. However, women's degree of independence and power was surprising, very great, much greater than anything

experienced in nineteenth-century England. The position of women in Igboland fell only with the arrival of European colonialism. During colonial dominance, Igboland women were denied any form of independence. They lost their means of subsistence, their customary practices (replaced with more rigidly patriarchal Anglo-Christian practices), and their political status.

Traditionally, the women were active in farming, cattle rearing, and strong trading, which made them virtually financially independent. According to Dike, before the British took control of Igboland, women were actively involved in farming, cattle rearing, and strong trading, which led to their virtual financial independence. Before the British took control of Igboland, women not only sold their own goods, but also frequently sold their husbands' agricultural produce. They kept all the profits from the commodities they sold, as well as a portion of the profits from their husbands' produce (Dike, 1985). Despite the effectiveness of this system, the British introduced taxation and wage labor, significantly undermining it (p. 39). British policies had a severe effect on both men and women, significantly impacting women in diverse ways. This is what Emecheta partially does in the re-creation of Efuru in her work, *Joys of Motherhood*. (Amadiume, 1987)

In addition, there were women's political organizations, sometimes referred to "mikiri" from the Igbo word for "meeting," where all women could gather to discuss, make representations against those who offended them, and seek redress. In particular, the women at the mikiri were free to discuss issues related not only to their roles as "wives and mothers," but also to their roles as "traders" and "farmers" (Van Allen, p.169–170). A woman could appeal to the mikiri, which often used collective action, such as strikes and boycotts, to end injustices if she felt her husband had treated her unfairly or if some man's livestock had damaged her crops (Van Allen, p.165; Okonjo,p. 53–54). More precisely, Igbo societies usually had a "dual-sex" system of government within which "each sex generally managed its own affairs and had its own kinship institutions, age grades, and secret and title societies" (Okonjo ,p.47). Some areas organized women's groups under a female leader, known as "omu," and a council that collectively "presided over each market and acted as a court in judging cases and disciplining" those who broke the law. The cabinet "included a policewoman" who "arrested offenders and brought them before the court" (Okonjo,p. 49).

The British, through warrant positions, instituted a system that undermined the judicial functioning of women's groups, even criminalizing them in certain cases. All disagreements had to be resolved within the British legal framework, which was completely male-dominated—it had

only male chiefs. Women lost all the institutions that had protected their rights and acted as advocates for them. The two-sex system was replaced, not by a gender-neutral system, but by a single-sex system, and that single sex was male (Okonjo ,p.55–56). According to Okonjo (p.56), British colonialism completely eliminated women's political offices in Nigeria.

These would have included female dibias, or diviners and healers, female deities, and so on. It is beyond doubt, therefore, that Igbo men recognized the importance of feminine concepts and emphasized the enormous power of the Earth Goddess, Ani, almost to the same degree that they had emphasized the immense power of the Sky God, Chukwu. Although not exactly similar, the goddess was an extremely important figure in Igbo life, which is quite evident from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* from the constant mention of the goddess and the fertility rituals associated with her. Christianity is also eroded further by its insistence upon a single male god and its denial of priesthood to its practitioners' womenfolk, amongst a variety of other reasons.

In contrast, Igbo women were active not only against acts of injustice carried out by Igbo men, but also against the British. The ready-to-hand phrase concerning a quaking-with-fear-at-the-feet-of-her-all-powerful-husband non-white woman does not correspond too well with this set of facts, including the evidence regarding activism against the British. The Women's War of 1929 marked the most significant resistance to British rule in the early part of the century, following the British conquest of Igboland. In that conflict, Igbo women used mikiri tactics to attack British courts, shops, and other targets. This is already an indication of the importance of the rituals that Igbo women have established over time. The men knew that the only type of resistance was physical force. This, however, was of no worth to the British because of the far superior arming that they had. For instance, mikiri practices such as boycotting, protesting, and participating in meetings, among others, proved immediately useful in opposing the British. In addition, the women who participated in the Women's War did not do so to request any form of European rights, as Amadiume emphasizes, but rather to demand the eradication of European practices and the restoration of Igbo customs (p.120).

To summarize, Igbo women who are knowledgeable about pre-colonial Igbo culture prioritize feminist or "womanist" ideologies and actions. Their focus is on improving women's status in society and promoting fulfilling lives for women. Their approach is rooted in Igbo principles rather than European influences. Rather than seeking Western modernity, they aim to

revive and reclaim the suppressed aspect of Igbo tradition known as women's culture, which was marginalized by British administration and misrepresented by British anthropology. This is because it provides an important context for Nwapa's novel (and other writing by Igbo women); particularly if one considers that following Nigerian independence, at precisely the time Nwapa was writing the novel, there was a renewed interest amongst women in such pre-colonial traditions, and indeed "a visible and deliberate move to resuscitate those roles that women traditionally played in public life" (Okonjo ,p.57). If one approaches the novel with the standard European view that tradition is oppression and modernization is freedom, one is likely to come away with a very distorted interpretation of Nwapa's point. This has, in fact, been one common problem with criticism of the novel.

2. 3 Colonialism in West Africa: The Impact of Christianity and Social Change

By the turn of the 19th century, the institution of colonial rule had marked major changes in the culture, history, and traditions of West Africa. The European invasion of Africa came as a surprise, bringing with it new views of the world, new models of culture, and new forms of government. Colonialism was not solely a historical occurrence characterized by the subjugation and utilization of land. It also involved the acquisition of political, economic, social, and particularly cultural dominance. Put simply, the colonization of West African territories resulted in the significant erosion, if not complete eradication, of the practices, traditions, and culture of the indigenous people. Instead, it gave rise to a new set of perspectives and knowledge that continue to shape the present-day experiences of West African individuals. The conclusion of the colonial era did not deconstruct coloniality, which refers to the collection of perspectives, the framework of knowledge, and the mentalities that were developed throughout the period of colonial control.

Moreover, it is essential to emphasize that within the multitude of materials imported and influenced by Europeans, a distinct tradition and history have arisen and endured up to the present time. Oyěwùmí(1997) examines the process of reimagining history and tradition in Africa, identifying three specific types of historical accounts. She explains that Africa's indigenous history is a firsthand experience that has been kept through oral traditions but has been replaced by the historical narratives of Western colonizers. This transition led to the establishment of a new historical framework based on the events and viewpoints that occurred after European colonization, thus altering the course of Africa's history

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The colonial powers manipulated and reinvented traditions and culture, both oral and written, to suit their agenda. Besides the new invention of traditions, colonialism was to have profound effects on structure and conceptualization in African societies, including economic systems, political structures, religious practices, and educational frameworks. The deliberate reshaping of African societies by colonial powers underlined the far-reaching effects that external intervention had on indigenous cultures and societal norms.

Ultimately, religion was redefined based on Western beliefs and ideologies. A gendered structure was imposed upon the religious discourse, and that eventually changed the nature of divinities. God was conceptualized as the Supreme Being, standing at the top of the spiritual hierarchy as a neutral being with no female or male qualities. However, God became a male deity under the newly imposed semantic terms. This logic eventually extended to all other gods, who stood at a lower rung in the spiritual hierarchy than the Supreme Deity, effectively masculinizing the whole spiritual hierarchy of religion.

The fact that religious contexts are predominantly dominated by the male gender underscores their complete subordination of West African women in all spheres of life. Whereas the impact of colonialism was an indiscriminate affair that affected the general population in West Africa, it is notable that women faced double oppression: from the colonial powers and from their local patriarchal structures.

With the myriad cases elaborated, it would be easy to perceive how colonial rule brought some important changes and innovations to the established heritage of West Africa. In this way, colonialism was engraved into every aspect of life—from the primary structure of traditional African society to economic systems, language behaviors, political systems, religious traditions, and the customs of indigenous beliefs. These lasting effects really underscore how deep the impact of colonialism has been on the historical narrative of African people. This signals the end of colonial rule, but its long-lasting heritage of coloniality will linger on within the collective story and history of communities at large for quite some time.

Colonialism led to the introduction of Christianity as well as Western ideals and ideologies. Since the beginning of European colonization, the main approach used by colonizers has been to convert Africans to Christianity and provide them with education. This project was expedited through Christian missions and the creation of several churches in areas considered favorable.

Within this framework, Christianity and education were considered interchangeable; educational endeavours frequently occurred within churches, enabling missionaries to transmit Western knowledge to African folk (Denzer, p.6). The primary conclusions on the process of Christianization and its impacts are based on the investigations conducted by scholars Oyěwùmí and Denzer, who analyses the occurrences within Yorubaland. One of the first people to accept this new religion and philosophy in this society were women. They became some of the early converts of this religion, for they needed help either as domestic slaves (slaves working in white houses) or to find relief from disagreeable marriage situations. However, Oyěwùmí observes that the primary beneficiaries of missionary education were Yorùbá men, since the aim had always been to use such education to introduce Christianity to them with the hope of winning them to become catechists, clerks, and missionaries who would guide their fellowmen into the Christian fold. (p. 129-130.)

Christianity provided the Igbo people with social opportunities that were not accessible through their traditional beliefs and rituals. The acceptance of multiple births, namely twins, resulted in mothers being allowed to retain custody of their children, eliminating the social exclusion formerly experienced by these mothers within the community. Furthermore, Christianity promoted the practice of young individuals entering into matrimony within the confines of a religious institution or a legal setting, whereas the customary norm entailed families convening, deliberating on particulars, and subsequently consenting to the union of the couple. Victor Uchendu asserts that the youth exhibit a preference for church weddings and monogamy due to the potential for economic advancement, access to education, and religious beliefs (p.49). Another significant transformation occurred as young, educated girls were instructed to marry prior to having children, contrary to the customary practice that did not mandate this sequence. Furthermore, educational training equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to obtain a degree, secure a job in the civil service, and lead a self-determined life

Again, such actions strayed from the standard expectations that the young should return to their communities of origin and help their families. So, in the early years of the twentieth century, big numbers of the educated elite, both men and women, moved to towns where they became teachers, civil servants, contractors, and medical professionals. The educated individuals aspired to adopt a Western lifestyle characterized by solitary living, abstaining from marriage, and delaying or even avoiding parenthood. Consequently, a significant number of Igbo individuals choose to

marry at a later stage in their lives, and a considerable proportion of couples prefer to reside in nuclear households rather than in extended family setups.

Flora Nwapa explored the moral and societal difficulties resulting from the influence of education and Christianity in her books. Uchendu argues that the Igbo people provided their backing to individuals both in the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Nevertheless, with the coming of western education and Christianity to the land, the power relationship between the male and female began to change. The combination of colonialism and the Nigerian Civil War has dramatically changed traditional norms and beliefs. Adeline Apena refers to the fact that the Nigerian Civil War, also widely referred to as the Biafra War, lasted from 1967 until 1970 and caused tremendous social change and a shift in gender associations and views on sexuality. Apena notices the beginning of a new trend for women who break traditional stereotypes, moving away from the familiar stereotype of women that characterises much of African literature written by men. Kumah comments that African male writers often overlook women in their works.

As a consequence of the male-dominated literary tradition, many of the depictions of African women are reductive – perpetuating popular myths of female subordination. Female characters in male-authored works are rarely granted primary status – their roles often trivialized to varying degrees – and they are depicted as silent and submissive in nature

2. 4 Empowering Nigerian Women: The Resilient Legacy of Flora Nwapa

African women writers have succeeded since 1960 in portraying a new image of African women, an enabling one, and thus making a vital contribution to the world of letters. Headed by Flora Nwapa, the first female novelist, the female writers have taken back what rightly belongs to women in history, culture, and society. They have provided a voice for women to express themselves emotionally and intellectually, along with their specific feminine insights. The writers challenge patriarchal norms and shift the literary landscape by putting women at the heart of their narratives. Reading African women's literature does not simply mean reading stories; it is reading women's self-affirmation about African history and a serious questioning of the structures of subjugation and oppression perpetuated by colonial powers and male authors. In this sense, the

narratives penned by African women writers become an important tool in reclaiming agency and challenging the dominant discourses that, for far too long, have captured women's voices.

Efuru is the title and central character of Flora Nwapa's first novel, *Efuru*, which rightly suggests her centrality to the storyline. As a result, when published in 1966, it was a landmark novel by Flora Nwapa, who was the first Nigerian woman novelist to write and publish a work in the English language. It was also timely, for it appeared at a time when the tensions leading up to the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1971) had started to grow in that country. In 1977, Flora Nwapa became the first female publisher in Africa by establishing Tana Press. Although recognized as the "mother of modern African literature," her contributions are still neglected in international literary canons and global literature studies.

Amidst an unstable society, Flora Nwapa faced challenges in her personal and professional life, as she revealed in a conversation with Marie Umeh in Scarsdale, New York, in 1992. The talk provided insight into a life she experienced, revealing the highs and lows she endured during Nigeria's most critical moment in history. During her tour to the United States, Nwapa discussed the nuances of her experiences and provided insight into the complicated fabric of her life and literary work, she said:

> I've had my ups and downs. In 1966, when Heinemann published *Efuru*, I did not receive much publicity because Nigeria was in a turmoil. There was a coup d'état in 1966 and the whole system had broken down. And in 1967, I had to go back to Eastern Nigeria, where all the Igbos returned from all over Nigeria. The war was fought for thirty months and when we came back, we had to start all over again. (p.24)

The challenges that the author faced during this time were not limited to the sad spectacle of war. As has been mentioned above, the literary scene was not exactly friendly to female writers; rather, it was largely occupied and dominated by male writers. This disposition made things a little difficult for Flora Nwapa with regard to publication and her relationship with her publisher. Seeking to publish *Efuru,* Nwapa sent the script to Chinua Achebe, who later forwarded it to the Heinemann publisher in London. But without the assistance of Achebe, she would not have been able to publish her novel. This initial success was followed by increasing opposition from her Western publisher, who consigned Nwapa to the category of 'Third World writer.'

This greatly limited the domestic and international circulation of her work, which turned, in her perception, into the suppression of her voice. While Achebe's commendation opened doors for Nwapa in the publishing world, she was nevertheless circumscribed by the possible closeness of success, for she was a woman and an African writer—a definition clothed in the eye of a European publisher. Therein lies the complexity one has to manage with these intersecting identities, helping to trace out the intricate dynamics at work inside the literary world and fleshing out, in all their subtle detail, the challenges women writers face in their struggle to make a name for themselves within the male-dominated writing profession.

Flora Nwapa-Nwakuche was born in Ugwuta, Nigeria, in 1931 to a family of moderate wealth. Nwapa really benefited from being part of a family that valued the education of females. She was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend school during a time when boys had the main privilege of access to education. Her schooling, passion for reading, and exposure to oral storytelling during her childhood fostered her love for writing:

> As a child I would call on anybody who promised to tell me a story. I would sit down and listen. And when I went to high school, I had read practically everything that I could find, so that contributed again to my writing. After graduating from Ibadan University in Nigeria and Edinburgh University in London, I came home to Nigeria and I taught at a girls' secondary school. While I was teaching, I discovered I had plenty of time on my hands. I didn't know what to do with it. So, I began to write stories about my schooldays. It was in this process that I began the story of Efuru (p.25)

Efuru tells the story of a young, strong woman surviving in a complicated world in Ugwuta during a period of immense sociocultural change caused by colonial influence in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While the action took place during colonial times, Flora Nwapa wove elements of culture from her hometown before colonisation into the plot and enormously related events around her protagonist, Efuru, to her own culture from Ugwuta. She modifies African traditions and historical accounts to guarantee that the perspectives and contributions of African women are emphasised and influential in shaping society standards and historical discussions. Nwapa's primary focus revolves around the intricacies of women's societal roles and their significant impact on African history. It is through the handling of these themes that Nwapa does something more than a praise to that resourceful and strong-willed African woman; rather, she critiques the dominance of

discourses that have usually marginalised the African woman's contributions towards the continental cultural framework.

During the discussion with Marie Umeh, the writer emphasised her objective to communicate a distinct perspective of African women, contrasting the one presented by male authors, she stated:

> When I do write about women in Nigeria, in Africa, I try to paint a positive picture about women   because there are many women who are very, very positive in their thinking, who are very, very independent, and very, very industrious. […] The male writers have disappointed us a great deal by not painting the female […]. I have to say that there's been a kind of an ideological change. I think male writers are now presenting women as they are. They are not only mothers; they are not only palm collectors; they are not only traders; but they are also wealthy people. Women can stand on their own. (Umeh, Nwapa, p. 27)

Nwapa shows much sensitivity in confronting and revising the conventional male concept of the female character and presents her unique view of the African woman. Hence, her characterization becomes the medium for projecting her own ideals of the feminine economy of independence and self-sufficiency. She encourages women not to rely on inheritance or men for their survival but to be independent, self-reliant human beings. Through her novels, therefore, it is possible for Nwapa to put across this empowering message: strive towards economic independence and self-sufficiency for women. This is not only a part of her literature but is also personally shared from woman to woman, a commitment of Nwapa to uplift and empower her fellow women. Through her writings and interactions, Nwapa encourages women to create their own paths, which are not bound by stereotypical gender roles or cultural traditions. (Umeh, Nwapa, p. 28.)

Flora Nwapa's insightful portrayal of African women reflects the culture of empowerment that surrounded her during her formative years. She has been quoted as saying that people who regard her as the pioneer among African women writers are mistaken. In truth, it is the oral historians and griots, with their stories of Ogbuide, the mystical mother of the lake, along with her industrious family members, who inspired her. Among all factors contributing to her accomplishments, Nwapa noted the most cogent commitment to service and striving toward excellence.

Nwapa found her inspiration for writing from almost everywhere. She was close to Achebe and Christopher Okigbo, who were very close friends, but she also got inspiration from works by Hemingway and Bernard Shaw.

The problems of the main character in Efuru are deeply connected to the lesson conveyed in the story. Flora Nwapa dismantles imperialist ideals and male-dominated narratives that aim to impose silence on this young woman through her experiences of suffering. By advocating for Efuru, Nwapa not only represented herself but also gave voice to all women whose narratives had been disregarded or misrepresented. Through her action, she establishes herself as a symbol of empowerment and amplifies the voices of those who have been suppressed for an extended period of time.

On another note, it is an example for those who want to express their truth through writing. Moreover, she boldly challenges age-long traditions and cultural values that have sustained the marginalization of women throughout generations by shedding light on the necessity of introspection and transformation within society. Nwapa thus opens up the pathway towards a more diversified, equal, and balanced portrayal of female experience in literature and life through her unapologetic representation of reality and by readily questioning generally held views.

Nwapa analyses the story from a community that maintains strong connections to its pre-colonial traditions. She recalls her childhood memories, highlighting that due to her parents Christianity, she had faces limited interactions with community members. She is seen as the other. Due to this constraint, she had limited access to the conventional cultural norms of her community. The little knowledge she did gain was primarily from her grandparents, who actively opposed the impact of Christian teachings.

The writing style of Flora Nwapa largely echoes African tradition, more so Igbo, and the strength and independence of African women. She drew upon strands of oral storytelling, like folklore and myths, to give her stories an air of authenticity and depth, as in the case of the legend of the lake goddess depicted in Efuru. She wrote in simple terms yet with a poetic touch, so well revealing the scenery, customs, and routines of her characters. Some common themes by Nwapa included economic independence, motherhood, and societal expectations. She contributed a great deal to reflective critiques of colonialism and patriarchy while showing tradition up against

modernity. Her works empowered women in a unique African cultural perspective and paved the way for generations of future African women writers.

2.5 Efuru as a Postcolonial Novel

Nwapa vividly portrays a contrast of women's and men's lives and roles. Much of the story revolves around Efuru, a lady known for her resilience, autonomy. Nwapa has drawn out the character of Efuru and other female leads in contrast to their male counterparts only with a view to talking about cultural norms and limitations placed on both genders. Nwapa portrayals of women and male characters in showing the intricate dynamics of gender relationships and their wider consequences for fathoming cultural and societal standards within African environments. Through these subtleties in characterization, Nwapa depicts different images of male and female characters; not all men are bad, and not all women are good.

Gender roles were significant in many traditional African societies. They mostly defined some roles that men and women were to play within their communities. Typically, men were supposed to provide for their families, protect the community from external attacks, and engage in religious and political affairs. Women were mostly expected to run family matters, raise children, and nurture social relations. However, deep-seated effects due to colonialism and modernization caused massive changes in accepted gender roles within African societies. These outside influences produced dramatic changes, some of which included the reversal of traditional gender roles and the breakdown of expectations that had prevailed for generations. Much about the altered roles men and women played in traditional African societies and the significant changes brought on by colonialism and its after-effects may be learned through the reading of African literature.

Flora Nwapa's Efuru epitomizes a society in change, whereby women have to become more masculine and take on masculine roles in order to survive and thrive within the changes, while men are expected to take on more feminine roles. This role-reversal challenges the conventional notion of gender identity and seems to result in confusion, conflict, and disorientation

African women have often been portrayed as a subordinate and marginalized group, deprived of agency. Many Western academics have described African women as unseen or unnoticed, implying that their stories should be told by Western male and female writers. In her work *Space for the Subaltern: Flora Nwapa's Representation and Representation of Heroism,*

Mary Modupe Kolawole clarifies that African women are shaped by diverse forces that frustrate their self-realization, and the main social institutions act as hindrances to their capability of expressing their experiences (Gay Wilentz, p.225) .

By the time, Nwapa's novel *Efuru* had introduced a new insight into traditional West African culture and contemporary Nigerian life into her works. Nwapa sets the narrative in Ogwuta, Nigeria, where she spent her childhood in the 1930s, to unfold the advocacy of women's values. Nwapa seeks to refute claims made by critics in the West that portray African women as nothing more than subjugated minority. In contrast to these stereotypes, women in African countries are strong and self-reliant. They are not defined by oppression, despite the fact that the onset of colonialism deprived them of some rights they had in precolonial society.

2.6 Male and Female Representation in the Novel: Gender Roles, Patriarchy, and Cultural Practices

Most of the literature depicts male and female characters in terms of prevailing gender roles and cultural norms in the culture within which the story is set. The roles are typically associated with patriarchal institutions, where male characters are most frequently typed as dominant, authoritative, and single workers. In contrast, female characters are portrayed as nurturing, submissive, and supportive. These representations reinforce dominant gender norms and discover systemically entrenched disparities between the sexes. Where patriarchal power is most severe, women's roles may be limited to the domestic sphere with minimal agency or autonomy. Literature destabilizes and consolidates gender relations, offering readers a window through which to observe how cultural practice animates gender identities and relations.

However, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* demonstrates the male and female characters based on gender roles and Igbo cultural practices in society. The novel portrays the impact of patriarchy on men and women in their lives. Gender roles are crucial in the characters' lives and in their adaptation to society's expectations and their personal objectives. The novel explores the limitations imposed on women in a patriarchal society via the experience of Efuru and the complexities of gender dynamics in a traditional environment. Characterization roles emphasize the attractive dynamic of cultural existence, gender identity, and power within the narrative context.

2.6.1 Male Representation

One evident aspect of the novel is the considerable adversity experienced by women. This primarily concerns the mistreatment of specific women by specific men. One can inquire about the extent to which this mistreatment is influenced by tradition vs colonization. In the wide scope of post colonization literature, there are plenty of explanations that might have been foreseen for this state of affairs. One example would be that it is largely driven by native, patriarchal traditions, and this would correspond with the conventional traditional European view. In another sense, this might be explained by the transient nature of some men in Igbo society. Several post-colonization authors emphasize the extent to which colonization creates a group of uprooted individuals who do not embrace either native traditions or European perspectives, but rather find themselves, as Achebe puts it, "no longer at ease" in any society. Cultural alienation is a phenomenon that is largely considered to be the cause of individual insensitivity and non-moral behavior. One could even imagine a situation where the abuse of women is a product of proper colonization and the enforcement of European customs and ideologies.

Indeed, Nwapa methodically examines these possibilities throughout the narrative. Evidently, from her perspective, patriarchy is a significantly more extensive issue than Igbo custom, colonial displacement, or European integration. Her first illustration starts with the character, Adizua, who is for an instance best described as "transitional" individual, who was brought up in a traditional community and continues to hold traditional beliefs, but does so within the framework of a colonized society. Adizua's deviation from tradition is evident from the outset of the narrative when he enters into marriage with Efuru without fulfilling the customary requirement of paying the bride price. Ogene; his full name is Nwashike Ogene ,Efuru's father. He commands considerable respect within his society, largely attributable to his father's legacy of resistance against the Aro people and his remarkable skills as a fisherman and farmer; observes that such occurrences are possible solely due to the recent European governance, characterized by perplexing legislation that has no connection to Igbo customs. He remarks that "Nwashike would have educated that ignorant individual," but laments that "These Caucasian individuals have imposed excessive pressure" to the extent that he is unable to act, as "Even the slightest action nowadays can result in imprisonment" (p.176). Additionally, Adizua depends on his wife's efforts to raise the required amount subsequently. This concept is totally illogical within the confines of

the conventional system. The groom's family presents the bride price to the bride's family, and the essence of this transaction is compromised if the bride herself is the one who offers it. Later, Adizua displays a profound lack of care for tradition by not coming back home for his child's funeral, a total carelessness for a highly significant occasion.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Adizua's behavior cannot be attributed completely to colonial influence. Instead, it is more universal. Adizua is undoubtedly the most horrible individual in Efuru's life, and the extent of his brutality may be influenced by his disconnection from his cultural roots. However, the cruel behavior itself is not. if we go back to the story we can notice that Adizua's father did the same to his mother. He had left Adizua's mother in a similar manner to how Adizua leaves Efuru. The story implies that this type of abandonment has its roots in the past, specifically in Igbo tradition. It is a problem that existed before the displacement of people from their homeland.

Alternatively, this could imply that the problem lies within custom or inheritance, and Adizua's own family is to blame. To challenge both of these interpretations, Nwapa uses Efuru's subsequent marriage to Gilbert. The author highlights Gilbert's English education and his Christianization, particularly his rejection of his "pagan" name (p.85). This would seem to suggest he rejects his "pagan" cultural heritage. Gilbert, unlike most Europeanized characters in post-colonization literature, does not portray himself as corrupted. Without a doubt, he demonstrates his superiority over Adizua and Adizua's father. His behavior is notably less brutal than theirs. However, it belongs to the same broad category. He forsakes Efùru for another lady, but later comes back and accuses her of adultery. This third version appears to aim at proving that Christianization alone cannot resolve the issue of unfaithful husbands. To clarify, the prevalence of mistreatment of women among Igbo is evident among transitional and Europeanized men, indicating that culture is not the sole influence.

Undeniably, Gilbert has not become completely Europeanized. Thus, in his accusation of Efuru's adultery, he openly speaks of "the gods" which obviously means the Igbo gods, deity (p.216). However, it is impossible to avoid the influence of the indigenous ideas impassioned into him as a result of being brought up in the Igbo culture. The strangeness in incorporating an Igbo man who seemed to be completely Europeanized and devoid of any traditions that were Igbo would have been out of place in the novel with regard to the time-frame. Given the facts of his situation,

Gilbert has become as Europeanized as could be fairly expected. He has also taken on many European cultural values that are relevant to our discussion of patriarchy. A clear example is in the area of Igbo traditional behavior concerning the admission of adultery. Gilbert's demand that Efuru confess, even given the mention to "the gods," is Christian rather than Igbo. s (Okonjo.p, 52)

In Igbo society, confession for adultery was indeed part of the traditions. However, such confession was not led by a male person and thrown before a male person. Like some Catholic priest, Gilbert gravely tells Efuru, "unless you confess your sin, you must die." "You must, therefore confess your sin to me and live," (p.216). According to Igbo custom, women would confess their adultery to the head of the all-women, who would perform purificatory rites for them afterwards. What happens in the scene in question quite obviously invokes, or alludes to Igbo customary practices that are blatantly violated. On the other hand, Gilbert's problem is not about his partial adherence to the Igbo principles; it is his adoption of Christian beliefs and practices that obviously negate Igbo practices that place women on a higher stand with respect to their real and spiritual freedom. (Okonjo.p, 52)

The brief portrayal of European women in the novel reinforces this point. Nwapa has describes the condition of colonial women to clearly indicate that Europeanization is not a route to liberation for Igbo women. "I pity these white women," she says. "What can one do alone in a big house doing nothing? The living must be hard." (p.). This is a statement partially satirically critical of white women's feminism, where they lament their own struggles while they and their men live in luxury off the back of black people's labor, but it is also partially serious. As the quote goes "Women of our town are very industrious" (p.194). This trait is not only good for the society alone but also for the women. As Betty Friedan and other advocates would argue, living in a big house alone all day could be hell of some time. Undoubtedly again, Europeanization is not the panacea for the problems plaguing the Igbo women. The European women also have their own kind of neglect, as they lack presence of mind and independence of the Igbo women.

To put it otherwise, Efuru emphasis the idea that men possess an inherent tendency towards corruption, leading them to exhibit cruelty against women, men are naturally corrupt and cruel to women as evident by the relationship between Uhamiri and Okita. Efuru finds peace after leaving her husbands, possibly favoring feminist separatism or female supremacy. However, in order not to generalize, Flora Nwapa's included another important male character in the novel that

was different in all levels. A man who behavies and treats women with respect,helps and supports his wife to develop herself socially ,economically supporting her independence. It is no fate that this man is also extremely traditional; certainly, he is a kind of ideal of Igbo tradition.

However, Nwapa presents another vital male character who demonstrates equity by showing regard for women. This character also remains supportive of his wife's economic and social advancement and thus encourages female independence. There is intentional support behind this character's strong upholding of tradition. He is considered the embodiment of Igbo culture. The Igbo society placed a significant emphasis on a limited range of masculine attributes. Accordingly, success in yam cultivation, wrestling, war, title-taking, and oratory were considered the epitome of feats a man could achieve. In the beginning, Ogene was described as possessing the plumpest yams in the village, having never lost a wrestling match, and demonstrating such valor that he could battle the Aros alone. He has obviously won himself the most prestigious titles—the highest-frequency ones, which were quite scarce. According to Achebe, there are just a few men in each generation who possess the qualities mentioned. Apart from that, he was a man who could speak reasonably in public. In other words, Ogene plays the stereotype of a traditional Igbo man very well. Instead of abusing women, he openly expresses his immense affection for Efuru's mother and his grief upon her death. He even goes to the extent of discussing her participation in women's groups and high-profile societies. (Isichei.p,22).

2.6.2 Female Representation

Through Nwapa's novel one can notice that she is not following a straightforward principle of "Men are bad; women are good." The characterization of some women in the novel such as Omirima, the gossip, primarily explains this even further. Firstly, creating issues in Efuru's second marriage, she talks about Efuru's infertility. Next-and more importantly, as the novel concludes, she raises and defines the question of whether Efuru committed adultery. At least as disagreeable as Adizua, Omirima is nonetheless much more reprehensible than Gilbert.

However, she is certainly far from being the only woman who acts to serve patriarchal oppression. In *Efuru,* women can serve patriarchy in two general ways-by betraying other women or by becoming the tools of men. Omirima is the model of the first one. There are several examples of the second type as well. For example, at one point, Efuru speaks of a childhood friend who was brave and self-assertive, even stealing "from the white man's garden." But now she "is married

and. calm as a lamb" (p.114). The most important case of this type, however, is Ossai. Though abandoned by Adizua's father, she remains faithful to him to the end of her life. She describes to Efuru how much she suffered in order to remain faithful to her husband, and she encourages Efuru to do the same with Adizua. One might, at this juncture, ask if there is a secondary gain in this suffering, some kind of benefit to the oppressed party. Ossai claims that "I am proud that I was and still am true to the only man I loved," and Efuru thinks, "Perhaps self-imposed suffering appeals to her. It does not appeal to me" (p.61). Later, Ossai's sister makes the same claim, "You wanted to be called a good wife .... You merely wanted to suffer for the fun of it" (p.79-80).

For Ossai, there was clearly some secondary gain. Still, it is painfully obvious that the secondary benefit did not match the misery. Though she might have been proud or self-satisfied, her suffering lacked "fun." Ossai tells Efuru and Ajanupu, dying, she does not want to live. "To live for what?" she says, "What is the purgent of living?" "Your want me to live that I may continue to suffer," she says; "My life has been one long suffering." As Àjanupu makes abundantly apparent, Ossai's self-sacrificing dedication is not tradden upon. From early on, she reminds Ossai that both she and their mother had insisted, that Ossai should "leave that terrible husband". Furthermore, both had asserted that "plain stupidity" rather than "virtue" was what this kind of self-sacrifice amounted to.

Not only do these two important cases of women's cooperation with patriarchy - Omirima and Ossai - not only serve badly inside die novel, but also point to Nwapa's answer to the patriarchal issue as well. Women should act in solidarity rather than undercutting one another like Omirima does. Women should be autonomous and depend on the emotional and cultural support of other women, not just be totally committed to a man and emotionally dependent upon him. The contrast between Nwasobi and Efuru's unidentified "friend" at the time of Efuru's daughter's death emphasizes this point quite effectively. Nwasobi only rubs salt in Efuru's wounds; it is a gentler form of Omirima. "Don't stay there enumerating all her misfortunes in a tone that suggests that you enjoy these misfortunes," Ajanupu reprimands her (p.73). On the other hand, Efuru's companion tells her own story of losing a daughter and acts to console Efuru, therefore offering her hope for the future. She is talking with Efuru about a common female experience. Her commiseration is commissionable among women. "That's how you sympathetically connect with

a woman who has lost her only child," Ajanupu says as she leaves. One finds words of wisdom and inspiration" (p.75).

Without a doubt, it is not accidental that Ajanupu praises the second woman and criticises the first since Ajanupu is among the key voices of female solidarity and tradition in the book. In her Ossai's emotional reliance, collusion with patriarchy, and ignorance of tradition stand in sharp contrast with her personal strength, tough-minded feminist solidarity, and thorough understanding of women's traditions - especially medical traditions.

2.7 Negotiating Power within Traditional Context

Nwapa skillfully describes the various roles and traditions of women in Igbo culture, highlighting their contributions to various aspects of social life. Specifically, the women's traditions depicted in the novel can be classified into three kinds: women's social and economic practices, women's traditional proficiency (particularly in treatments related to women's health issues, such as childbirth), and women's religious faith and celebrations.

Another prominent feature of the novel is women's economic independence. In accordance with the traditional Igbo worldview, Nwapa makes trade the preserve of women. Men are generally incompetent traders and less industrious than women, except in very few cases. Adizua was in a traditional relationship with Efuru, as he didn't possess the art of trading. It was Efuru who concocted the business" (p.36). In addition, Efuru is not alone. The Igbo saying "hands make money" reflects the ability of many female characters in this novel to generate income. Not only does this bring financial independence for women, but women can also support other women. With her great success, Efuru has both the resources to pay for one elderly woman's operation and to lend money to many ladies. Ensuring economic prosperity is critical not only for the individual women themselves, but also for the collective's overall welfare.

Ajanupu holds an important position in matters concerning the economy, but her most pivotal role is in the preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices concerning women's health. It is the women themselves who preserve such indigenous knowledge and pass it on. Efuru consults Ajanupu for advice about how to relieve her pregnancy-related swelling in the legs, and she follows her advice until she is healed (p.29). Upon the birth of the infant, Ajanupu fulfills the

role of a midwife. Despite lacking official training (p.31), she has evidently acquired knowledge of midwifery through participation in a women's culture.

In keeping with this role, she is also familiar with the traditional remedies for children's illnesses. As the last resort, which undermines her expertise, she suggests they go to a dibia, or a traditional healer-cum-diviner. Except she recommends a female dibia versed in women's lore. Not the usual male sort of dibia (p.33).

Furthermore, the metaphorical connection of Uhamiri with Efuru's mother implies that, according to Nwapa, Uhamiri can be regarded as the universal mother figure for all women. Uhamiri is seen as their spiritual mother, the origin of their achievements, the foundation of their unity, and the focal point of their collective efforts to combat patriarchal subjugation. It is in this place equally that economic prosperity is most apparent. Whenever Efuru had a dream about the woman of the lake, tremendous success awaited her business in trading the next morning, (p.147). After that, she meets a dibia, who tells her that Uhamiri enriches those who serve her and that nearly all the tall buildings in the town belong to women who have served Uhamiri faithfully. However, this economic prosperity does not serve as a final objective. It is solely a method. According to a dibia, Uhamiri is particularly generous towards ladies (p.153). The purpose of her promoting women's economic success is to encourage kindness among them.

This problem is emphasized in one of the final sections of the novel. Efuru has recently financed Nnona's surgical procedure, utilizing her affluence to assist a fellow woman in distress. While strolling along the road one evening, she encounters an unfamiliar woman who halts her progress. The woman warmly welcomes her in a manner that strongly reflects her commitment to following Igbo traditions. (Later, Efuru consults a dibia to seek clarification over her nightmares involving Uhamiri.) The dibia commends her for greeting him in the traditional manner. The significance of greetings in the narrative is evident. Following the customary salutation, the unidentified woman expresses gratitude for your actions on behalf of your sister, Nnona. "I appreciate your gratitude, my daughter. This is an example of how sisters should treat each other, and I appreciate it. She alone can confidently be known as Uhamiri. She is the only person who can rightfully be termed as the "Mother" of both Efuru and Nnona. And she is the only person for whom these two women, one young and one "aged" (p.122), can potentially be called sisters.

Nnona, the old woman, addresses Efuru as "my daughter" and not as "sister" (p.124). The passage thus amounts to an all but explicit and forthright statement of the central theme in Nwapa's work: According to the women's tradition among the Igbo, represented by the goddess Uhamiri, women should regard each other as sisters and daughters of the goddess. They are expected to share their wealth and good fortune with each other in the same way that Efuru shares her good luck with Nnona.

This illustrates the majority of the problematic closing paragraph. Upon departing from Gilbert, Efuru slept a deep and undisturbed sleep. During this fall asleep, she had a dream about the woman of the lake, who provides to women both physical attraction and financial success (p.221); Nwapa considers the goddess and the women's tradition associated with it to be the fundamental elements that contribute to women's prosperity, unity, and, thus, their state of peace. The ultimate inquiry is undoubtedly ironic: ""But [Uhamiri] had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood. Why, then, did the women worship her? "They worship her. They worship her due to the abundance, unity, safety, and tranquility that her customs provide, all of which are completely unrelated to the "joys of motherhood.". For The conclusion does not reject the goddess, Igbo culture, or any other aspects related to motherhood. Instead, it emphasizes the utmost significance of that tradition, even beyond the realm of motherhood.

However, Nwapa does emphasize Uhamiri's infertility, at one point even claiming that her followers have no children themselves either (P.162) the motives for this appear to be located in particular fears within the Igbo religious mindset. What is Nwapa trying to do in such an approach, Definitely, is not to denigrate procreation; she wants to mark out the feminine lineage of Uhamiri as distinctly as possible from the generally patriarchal legacy of Ani, the goddess of fertility. In fact, any type of goddess worship is preferable to none at all, for the exclusion of females is complete when divinity is reserved exclusively for male divinities. On the other hand, divine or divine-like beings may also limit women to a narrow range of social possibilities.

Many writers have maintained that the high status of the Blessed Virgin within Catholicism has exerted a repressive influence on the sexual expression of Catholic women. Duty towards Ani can be seen as having a similar role of constraint within Igbo society. One of the main themes throughout the novel would be the mistreatment of infertile women, that is, women who are not able to bear children like Ani. Indeed, infertility is a big problem in both of Efuru's marriages.

Moreover, Ani does show up everywhere. Furthermore, their nature is always negative as well. For instance, Nwapa narrates the story of the birth of a strange boy on the farm, whom "the deity of the land," Ani, ordered to die (p.169). On the refusal of the father to release his son to Ani, Ani punished them with a poor harvest (p.170). Omirima publicly denounces Uhamiri (p.162) and, in a later development, invokes Ani in the act of accusing Efuru of adultery when she says, "She is guilty of adultery.She has sinned against the goddess of the land" (p.215).

2.8 Tensions between Tradition and Modernity

The Igbo culture is rich, diverse, and very prominent as one of the primary ethnic groups in Nigeria. Flora Nwapa describes an Igbo society in detail in her work 'Efuru', narrating the journey of Efuru, the main character. Through her works, she mainly wishes to bring about a change in people's mindsets about the typical roles played by women as mothers and wives in African society. Igbo culture is among the major cultures upholding patriarchy. All people view women as inferior to men. To be able to be true to their traditional values, individuals must uphold the standards identified with rites and other regulations that oversee cultural practices. Mainly, these are there to provide a way of highlighting the crucial role of women in society.

One of the major themes in the novel is the social idealization of motherhood. In the early 1940s, there were prevailing ideals that viewed having children as the ultimate symbol of femininity. Thus, if a woman fails to bear children, she loses her identity, since traditional notions point out that a childless woman is not a woman. Efuru shows much respect towards her cultural heritage; for instance, she is prepared for pregnancy through constant bathing and also bears the pain of female circumcision, which is then considered a rite of passage necessary for one to qualify to be a mother. In addition, Efuru does acknowledge men's rights to polygamy, but with justifiable reasons. When Adizua fails to conceive after their first marriage, she persuades him to marry another woman who will bear children. However, when he leaves her and her daughter to marry another woman without informing her, she does not welcome this event. She waits briefly for his return and then leaves his house to go back to her father's. This proves her commitment to self-identity and self-respect. Such events illustrate the tension between tradition and modernity, as perceived by the protagonist.

The arrival of Europeans in Nigeria occurred in the early nineteenth century, and it took approximately a century (1857–1960) for the British to dismantle a society that had developed

over thousands of years. This indicates that European colonialism functioned as a significant catalyst for change. As described in the book, the concept of modernity was born from the Western education that the African people received, but it only came into the popular limelight by the mid-twentieth century. Note that this does not imply that European cultures and traditions influenced the liberating process of women in Africa, Asia, or any other non-European society. In fact, within pre-colonial Nigerian society, women actively engaged in farming and extensive trade, exhibiting greater equality and feminist ideals than were present during the colonial period. Efuru does not openly resist her cultural heritage; instead, she values romantic love and rejects the concept of arranged marriages.

Even though the majority of her works embody the idea of feminism, Flora Nwapa initially resisted the label. During the early years of her creative career in the 1970s, the concept of feminism was defined in a distinct manner. The author interpreted it as being anti-men and hence expressed her dissociation from it. Nevertheless, her works consistently feature strong and capable female protagonists who are determined and well-informed. Efuru, the text, specifically examines the concept of baroness from a feminist perspective. Efuru adheres diligently to her traditional customs, but she is scorned for her infertility. However, she maintains her autonomy and does not allow others to make decisions on her behalf. She possesses enough self-respect to acquire the skills necessary to progress. Her contemporary outlook on her lifestyle is now defined by her feminist principles. To summarize, the novel effectively portrays a distinct juxtaposition of modernity and tradition, while adhering to the literary norms of African literature in the 1940s. Additionally, it creates a subtle and calm coexistence of both ideas

In this text, the themes of tradition and modernity are interwoven. The examination seeks to get into the words and actions of the characters with respect to the framework of traditional Igbo customs and beliefs, highlighting their confrontation with traditional values in the light of the colonial imprint on Igbo culture. The analysis questions women's and men's choices and whether such choices will yield satisfaction or give rise to conflicts. Moreover, the text explores the idea of female characters bargaining not just for themselves but for the wider community as well. The connection between individual decisions and communal good. In addition, it gets into Nwapa's portrayal of women in her novels, such as the main protagonist Efuru, which brings out the traditional Igbo society's expectations of women in society as wives and mothers. Through the

words and actions of the characters, traditional and non-traditional views of women's choices are presented, calling for scrutiny by means of voicelessness and expressing the desires for change and compromise in nuance through words and actions that straddle the rigid lines of tradition at one end and the societal pressures and biases at another. It also includes a review of the line of conflicts, such as double standards and cultural expectations, that create yearning for change and acceptance among the characters. Portrayal of tradition in confrontation with modernity through the character of Efuru in Flora Nwapa's novel is very clear and obvious to the readers. According to Ogunyemi, Efuru has traversed into selfhood and empowerment through mothering within the community. The novel falls into two parts: the former dealing with Efuru's individualistic desires and choices, and the latter being the corrective and instructive phase in which Efuru takes up the peaceful respected role within the community by way of marriage to Uhamiri.

The narrative traces Efuru's evolution through ideological confusion, political awakening, material nurturing, and spiritual growth, underscoring her quest for self-determination and the assessment of the consequences that arise from the effects of her actions on herself and society. Another example of tension between tradition and modernity can be found in the portrayal of courtship and marriage in the novel. Efuru made a very strong decision: she chose a husband all by herself and got married without following the usual rules of getting permission from her father or the payment of a bride price.The challenge to the established marriage systems, complete with communal participation and attendant rituals, is the argument between Efuru and Adizua over her insistence on marrying immediately and skipping the formality of bride-price. Despite being accepted, Efuru's defiance of societal norms is met with apprehension, as evidenced by her mother-in-law's mixed feelings. While she welcomes Efuru, she also expresses concern about the violation of traditional customs and the potential consequences for Efuru's father and family. This conflict between Efuru's independent choices with marriage and family and traditional expectations underlines an open negotiation in the novel between tradition and modernity. This portrays wider societal shifts and individual agency connected with the navigation of cultural norms and personal autonomy.

This strongly brings out the tension between individual autonomy and societal expectations throughout Efuru and Adizua's activities against the background of Flora Nwapa's novel. Efuru and Adizua break traditional customs by marrying without following the usual procedures of

introduction by families, discussions of dowry, and formal wedding ceremonies. Efuru knowingly chooses a mate from another social and economic background, thereby showing her break away from tradition since she disregards traditional rules that control such relationships.

Efuru's claim to independence is characterized by her decision to take things into her own hands in the marriage arrangements, as shown by her declaration, "'I shall settle it myself'". Efuru's actions defy existing assumptions, prompting inquiries about the underlying authorial voice expressed through the character. This action is an intelligent attempt to increase awareness, with the goal of questioning existing standards and encouraging individual autonomy and self-governance. Subsequently, Efuru delays the payment of the bride price until a later stage in life, when the couple has acquired sufficient resources to sustain themselves. This action solidifies her position as someone who is capable of adhering to societal expectations in a manner that aligns with her own values and objectives.

One senses the ideological struggle within Efuru between balancing the changing beliefs with old traditions, represented by the delayed realisation of some customs. Efuru acts in defiance of established customs and gestures in the direction of longing for independence and self-empowerment. The community's reaction therefore underlines the broader societal effects of colonial influence and changing attitudes towards tradition and modernity. The realisation on the part of the community about the external influences and the possible weakening of traditional values because of colonial impositions shows intricate interaction between the cultural legacy and external forces that shape community dynamics. In this novel, how individual choice, social norms, and external pressures view each other is rather complex, as seen in the actions of Efuru and the responses from the community. This novel shows that cultural values are changing and that there is a continuous struggle for independence and self-determination amid changing beliefs in society.

This aspect is brought out in the text when Efuru resolves to trade in the urban centre rather than practicing agriculture with her husband, Adizua. This is a clear indication of independence and strong will; as she puts it clearly, "If you will, you can go to the farm." A farm job is not suited to my ability." I am going to trade (p.10). The decision by Efuru to stay back on her personal path instead of accompanying her husband to the farm is condemned by the community, a fact that reveals that there is tension between conventional gender roles and changing ideas about individual autonomy.

Her second marriage, to one Gilbert Eneberi, also puts her in situations where there is much straddling between tradition and modernity. The westernization of Gilbert through the adoption of Western customs and education is viewed with suspicion by the community, as manifested in the concern expressed over his not being married. Efuru's explanation that Gilbert had not married because he was schooling indicates changes in society, evidence of change in cultural behavior under the impact of external influences. Efuru's interaction with her friend and the community thus mirrors a constant tug of war between tradition and changing social mores now informed by education and external views. The conversation between Efuru and her friend is a very fine example of diversity (polyphonicity) in language, where two socio-ideological views points that highlight the tension between tradition and modernity in the institution of societal norms. In the story of *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa deals with the complex interplay between tradition and modernity by recognizing individual choice and autonomy in decision-making amidst evolving cultural landscapes. Efuru and Gilbert Eneberi make it clear that through the marriage rite of passage, done exactly to prescription, a cultural continuum between the past, the present, and the future can be realized. Sharing palm wine, kola nuts, and home-made gin in the father's house symbolically starts off the ritual as a deep regard for tradition and is received by the family. Further respect for cultural practices binding them to their heritage is shown by Efuru and Gilbert when they adhere to the traditional process of obtaining permission from Efuru's family and completing bride-price.

The dialogue between Efuru's father and Gilbert shortly following the completion of the marriage rituals highlights the fusion of traditional beliefs and contemporary circumstances. Gilbert's sense of responsibility and commitment to tradition is evident, whereas Efuru's father remarks on the lack of dedication to marriage among modern men. This exchange highlights the disparity in opinions regarding marriage and cultural norms, which reflect the shifting dynamics between traditional values and contemporary sensibilities.

Though they were happily married, problems soon emerged between Efuru and Gilbert when the question of motherhood became an issue. It reiterated the past convoluted problems within that particular role in both marriages of Efuru. Motherhood is such an issue that recurrently disturbs Efuru's strength and societal expectations, therefore putting across succinctly the strong effects cultural norms have on women's identities and roles within society.

In the union of Efuru and Gilbert and in the persistence of motherhood that accompanies it, Flora Nwapa has succeeded in interweaving a complex tale of tradition, contemporary values, and changes in the character of familial relationships. Therein lies their story, so poignant in reflection on these cultural connections that shape people's experiences down the line, bringing out the value of tradition in personal and communal identity.

2.9 Beyond Margins: Ambiguity, Otherness, Identity and Cultural Hybridity

From the beginning of the story of *Efuru*, "Efuru has eloped with a young man" (p. 8). This remarkable action sheds light on the plot; it marks one's deviation from cultural prescriptions and tradition-laden expectations from women. Through her running away with a young man, Efuru asserted her governance over herself, raising her protest against the confinements that were placed before her. She states the aspiration for independence and self-development in very clear words, which she wants to achieve at all costs, even if it involves breaking up social norms. This phase of growth in Efuru marks an important milestone in her development toward her full potential and discovering a whole range of options that women in a patriarchal culture have.

The female protagonist in the analyzed work is influenced by the interplay of gender, class, and race, highlighting the disparities and obstacles they face compared to men. The work explores the societal standards and limitations placed upon women, which confine Efuru to traditional gender roles and consequently restrict her options and independence. Moreover, it exposes the societal expectations placed on women to conform to particular roles and behaviors. In addition, the combination of gender and social class adds another layer of complexity to the experiences of the female protagonist.

While being of middle-class status gives Efuru privileges and opportunities, it also cuts her off from a specific set of expectations and limitations. Class differentials thus exert a strong influence on the options and possibilities open to the female protagonists and the problems they do encounter in making choices.

Moreover, race and gender intersect to define the lives of the female protagonists. The work presents a woman who resides in African country where cultural and traditional conventions have a strong impact. Race strongly impacts cultural expectations and behaviors set for women; therefore, it affects these standards of social norms, authority within their respective societies and

beauty. Nwapa writes that Nwapa notes, "her body was bare showing her beautiful breasts. No dress was worn when a young woman went to the market after a period of feasting. Her body was exposed so that the people saw how well her mother or her mother-in-law had cared for her" page . According to Nwapa, a lady who was not lovely on that particular day would never be beautiful for the rest of her life.

In contrast, the male characters in the novels benefit hugely from patriarchy and societal expectations. Men have more freedom to get educated, pursue careers, and exercise other professional interests and desires as the example of a doctor. In most of these stories, men do appear to have greater control and discretionary power over their life choices than the female protagonists. They are not bound by similar expectations and restrictions as in the case of women, and hence are able to move around with relative freedom and autonomy.

Nwapa depicts the power inequality between men and women, whereby men are portrayed as the decision-makers while women have to act within the realm of what is expected of them in society. More importantly, she shows how limited the agency accorded to the female gender is and how autonomous the male gender is allowed to be, as she points out, "Women are nothing. He, my husband was asleep when the thieves came to the house. But I am only a woman. What can a woman do?" (p, 178)

Through the novel, Nwapa reveals the prevalent patriarchy in society and personal relationships that makes it simple for men to be free and self-determining agents of will, as opposed to the female protagonists in the novels. Men are portrayed as the principal actors who decide fate for themselves, while women are supposed to stand by the set standards given by society in their conduct and proper function within the patriarchy.

Additionally, Nwapa portrays how Efuru and the rest of the women of her kind would stand alone. Indeed, because they were facing the same difficulty, and problems, therefore they had to depend on one another. She writes: "Now that the wound had healed, she went out with other women who were circumcised like her" (p. 17)

Nwapa also portrays the difficulties that Efuru encounters as she endeavors to establish her autonomy and resist societal expectations regarding gender. When Efuru is about to give birth, the midwife ordered her, "you are a good child. Don't cry. Don't shout. If you cry or shout, you will

continue shouting and crying each time you have a baby." (p. 31). Clearly, this prohibition against crying or shouting implicitly means that a woman is supposed to undertake the physical and emotional harshness of childbearing without showing any form of weakness or infirmity. The stereotype being perpetuated by society and never to show emotions is that women have to bear pain and suffering in silence.

Nwapa investigates how gender identities, through the conditioning of a culture that shapes its norms and expectations, often end up very limited in women's expression of the real self, further carrying on conventional gender stereotypes. It will go on to show the world that the time has come when traditional concepts about gender in society are to be questioned and reinvented in order for justice and equality to be achieved by all. For example, Nwapa describes: "we say that a woman has left her husband, but never say that a husband has left his wife. Wives leave husbands not the other way round."(p. 90). She sheds light on the imbalanced power relations and gender-based expectations prevalent in conventional patriarchal civilizations. Nwapa emphasizes the existence of a double standard in the breakdown of marriages, where women bear the entire burden of blame. In Efuru, the author highlights the prevalent societal belief that women are obligated to be loyal and devoted, while men are not held to the same standards.

Furthermore, Nwapa highlights deep-rooted gender prejudices and cultural norms, such as the notion of male supremacy in marriage and the subordination of females to their husbands. This phenomenon demonstrates an unfair allocation of power and influence within traditional patriarchal organizations, as women are often held accountable for the positive or negative outcome of a marriage, while men are seldom subjected to such scrutiny. Thus, Nwapa underscores the importance of activism in attaining gender equality and underscores the harmful consequences of marriage in perpetuating restricted and harmful ideologies that impede women's independence and freedom to choose.

The self is intrinsically related to society, and it finds its true meaning only in interaction with people. All human beings have a self-concept. This self-concept is a sum total of abstract mental thoughts about our perception of self, as well as details about our past, present, and future. It gives us a decent level of comfort regarding self-awareness. Then comes the awareness of others. This is a classical binary opposition, the self/other dualism that moves around the centering of homogeneity while decentering difference. In Efuru, there are men at the center and women on the

periphery. Women are both expendable and disposable. They are constantly monitored by society, not accepted for who they truly are, and not acknowledged for their achievements. Only being a good wife and mother fulfills the societal expectations for women, making these roles their primary life goals. Though Efuru had many admirable qualities, she remained underestimated and undervalued.

Through the novel, one can see that Nwapa uses binary opposition, where it puts men in the front; they regard themselves as the "self," whereas it portrays women as the "other" in society. This image is portrayed through various male characters in the novel. For instance, As if like his father, Adizua turns out and leaves Efuru without notice, just like when he was a child and his father left him with his mother. Again, this is the same case when Gilbert (the second husband of Efuru) doesn't show up to bury Efuru's father, which hurts and makes her deserted. When Efuru suddenly reappears after a long time of absence, she meets Gilbert, imprisoned for some silly act. Even though Efuru did not press Gilbert to give her details of what he did, she has the capacity to understand and to forgive because of her inherent goodness. This is a way of showing how Efuru would always support and show care, especially whenever she finds herself in unfavorable situations in the relationship.

The nature of Efuru's relationship with her first husband, Adizua, undergoes a significant shift a few years into their marriage as Adizua's attitude towards his wife undergoes a full transformation. Adizua displays profound coldness towards her and begins neglecting her, a behavior that his wife cannot rationalize because she did not provoke him in any way "Efuru would then go to bed and think. 'What is wrong?' she would ask herself. 'How have I offended my husband? What am I going to do to win him back. Has he found another woman?'" (p. 58). Despite possessing numerous admirable qualities, Efuru experiences inappropriate treatment from her husband, which leads to significant emotional distress and an intense inner conflict. Ultimately, he abandons her without prior notice to pursue another woman. Adizua's actions demonstrate a self-centered mindset, emphasizing the degree to which a wife or woman can lose their value and become disposable. In this social setting, women become subaltern figures, marginalised against men who view themselves as the dominant subject. Nwapa tries to negate the patriarchy by emphasising the contradiction inherent in Igbo society. Nwapa depicts a society that fosters the

development of binary gender in response to the disappointing qualities shown by certain male characters in her work.

Gilbert the educated guy, did not attend his father in law funeral, and made Efuru feels sad, angry and ashamed from the community, 'He returned four months after my father's death. It was a great humiliation. Our people gossiped. My friends were sorry for me; my enemies laughed at me. When he returned, he looked sick and miserable. We were concerned…" (p. 278). Not only this, he hides the truth from Efuru and Nkoyeni, 'She was angry because her husband, with whom she had lived for nearly six years, could, at that stage of their married life, hide something from her. Angry because she had again loved in vain. She had deceived herself all these years, as she deceived herself when she was Adizua's wife." (p. 265-266)

One important scene that Nwapa explicitly passed a message through it. She expresses Efuru's deep connection with her daughter and the feeling of disappointment for losing her, is deeply linked with Nigeria's national identity crisis, the anticipation and terror of life without colonialism (independent life) that Nigerians have are placed as an allegory on Efuru's body through the subjugation of the Igbo patriarchal system. This painful separation between a child and their mother is portrayed by the author as an opportunity for crucial personal growth (national growth), which can ultimately lead to transcendence. (p.10). Nwapa observes that the harsh reality of colonial existence and the challenges of navigating under authoritarian systems might push individuals towards extreme choices.

Through the novel, the reader may notice that Nwapa's utilized characters might be different and varied, there are those who signify tradition and those who support change. For instance, Gilbert's mother support change while Ajanup is very traditionalist and preservative. Colonialism has introduced a lot of change and values to the Igbo society, "Things are changing fast these days. These white people have imposed so much strain on our people" (p.11-12)

In a powerful example, that illustrates Gilbert's mother unconcern about child bearing , she is happy to see her son happy with his wife Efuru even though without children .By contrast, the whole society rely female happiness with children .So his mother represents change and flexibility ,that she was influenced by western thought ,learned from her son who was a product of education in schools taught by missionaries. However, having lived all his life within this traditional

community, Gilbert eventually finds himself in a double bind when Efuru does not get pregnant four years into their marriage.

The individuals are uncertain about their readiness to embrace change, but they acknowledge that the new will likely supplant conventional values and rituals. This kind of situation may cause ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty, whether to keep their traditions, customs and religion or they should be replaced by the colonized values.

On the same vein, Gilbert, who truly symbolizes this ambiguity. He was originally named Eneberi, however, he was influenced by the western colonialism and western education, so he changed his name, as a symbol of changing his identity. According to Nwapa, this character in living in betweenness he is neither English nor Nigerian and it is very clear through his actions. Actually, he does not accept all Igbo traditions, instead he negotiates choice with Igbo traditional environment. This is what made him difference and distinguished from her first husband, Adizua . Evidently, there is a coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present (a valued educated one) and the past (a no devalued traditional) one. This is why, Efuru found her happiness with him, may be, they share the same thought and definitely, she marries with someone who is more on her socio-economic level.

Furthermore, Gilbert shows that one should not care about remaining to follow tradition. For example, he does not marry in an early age, because he went to aschool , "You forget that he went to school and that those who go to school do not marry early" (p.128). He even marries Efuru who has been married before. Efuru and Gilbert establish a cultural continuity that spans over the past, present, and future.

The narrative explores Gilbert's rejection of traditional norms and his hidden pursuit of a second wife without Efuru's awareness or approval, which raises inquiries into the impact of Western education on his actions. His choice to participate in a private relationship and have a child with someone other than his wife demonstrates a preference for personal wants over shared societal principles. This highlights a possible conflict between distinctive Western beliefs and traditional Igbo traditions that stress the importance of community and mutual agreement in relationships. Both Adizua and Gilbert's break from Igbo customs by removing Efuru from decisions concerning additional partners suggests a transition towards individual liberty and self-interest that might be affected by foreign cultural factors, such as Western education.

Efuru is a remarkable example of challenging patriarchal standards. It is the first literary work written by a woman, written in English, and distributed worldwide. Throughout history, men have asserted their superiority, referring women to a submissive position based on a baseless and unjust binary opposition. This deep-rooted resistance establishes a system in which men hold the dominant position of control and influence, while women are marginalized and confined to the periphery of public conversation. Flora Nwapa's innovative work confronts the deeply rooted patriarchal system, subverting the established norms and giving prominence to the perspectives and stories of women who have historically been suppressed and marginalized within the dominant male-centered narrative. Efuru is a powerful symbol of defiance against the oppressive influence of patriarchy, marking the beginning of a new period in literature where women are empowered and the prevailing male perspective is questioned.

2.10 Resistance to Colonial Narratives and Language Use

Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* principally places her female characters at the forefront, mainly the main protagonist, by mentioning them by their names throughout the story. Unlike most male writers, who frequently leave their female characters unidentified, Nwapa gives proper nouns to almost all the female characters in her work, thereby giving them separate identities and active roles in the narrative. The fact that female characters are specifically named and highlighted as special identifies them at the center and in a prominent position in the story, offering a vivid contrast to the non-individualized representation of women in, for instance, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's early writing.

The strongest example provided with Nwapa is that using the expression "the woman of the lake" instead of Uhamiri gives her a higher status; she is presented to be superior to others and strong. This symbolic kind of giving the name does not only show the significance of the character but also gives the impression of power and mystique to the character, which marked her main role in the story. It is through such unique naming conventions and expressions that Nwapa strongly projects the voices and identities of her female characters to amply flesh out the portrayal of women's experiences and views represented in women literature.

Moreover, personal pronouns are used strategically by Nwapa in *Efuru* to emphasize the issue at hand regarding female characters in the novel. With the persistent use of feminine pronouns like "she" and "her," Nwapa deliberately increases the capacity of the voices of her female

characters, hence underlining female presence. In fact, it is observed that Nwapa normally avoids using the name "Adizua" but instead uses the pronoun "him" when referring to him. She often simply refers to him as "the man," which might even be indicative that she attaches lesser importance to her female characters in the story. Such selective use of pronouns does much more than merely keep focus on the women in the story; rather, they also provide lower importance to the men, again very subtly, as part of Nwapa's narrative choices when it comes to shaping her gender dynamic in the novel.

By using positive adjectives for the female characters and setting stereotypical descriptors apart for the male character, Nwapa can be said to disrupt traditional gender norms and thereby call on readers to question and revise established gender distinctions. This way, one deconstructive reading could lead to the inference that quality assignments to characters are not essentially attached to their gender but constituted via societal expectations and power dynamics. This focused choice of adjectives by Nwapa challenges essentialist ideas about gender and also invites a re-examination of how exactly language constructs and reinforces gender identities.

Among the styles adopted by most African writers is the use of proverbs in their works. Proverbs are very important tools in African oral tradition, as they bear wisdom and cultural heritage. The infusion of proverbs in the narratives by writers not only enhances the aesthetic value of their works but also infuses them with a strong African cultural identity, the Igbo. Proverbs are thus the mediums that join the literary world to the expansive tapestry of oral traditions, ensuring that African heritage is preserved and celebrated within the written word.

Nwapa uses proverbs very skillfully to enhance the plot in *Efuru*. For instance, Ajanupu used this proverb to inform Efuru discreetly that her husband, Adizua, was having other women, warning her that 'an elderly person cannot stand by and watch a goat be tied without doing anything'(p.57) . Ajanupu invokes this proverb to bring out the meaning of sisterhood among women in the novel. The proverb resounds symbolically with the dependence and mutual support of women when they are on the edge of being oppressed. It characterizes another important aspect of unity and collective strength in the story. She has used proverbs to increase the cultural authenticity of the text and to reinforce the repeated themes of female unity and strength throughout the story.

Through her writing, she uses her cultural heritage in the form of proverbs and translates them into the English language to make stories more vivid. Her strategic use of these proverbs assists her in achieving two main things: she saves some aspects of her culture, and she uses such an aspect to define and emphasize her views about gender. Basically, she uses proverbs to assign value to the women and, importantly, to stress unity among women in the story. The deliberate choice of proverbs as a medium to bring out the strength and solidarity of women has amplified female characters' voices and experiences within the portrayal of gender dynamics in the telling of the narrative.

It is, therefore, conclusive that the different linguistic choices that Nwapa has strategically deployed are to validate the centrality of her characters and themes as presented in the book. Nwapa deliberately uses language to vest in her female characters the power and grant them the amount of attention and competence that befits them. Using language devices in her narrative helps Nwapa raise women's voices to coequal status with men, hence challenging and tussling with traditional gender roles toward the recognition and celebration of the experiences and contributions of women. Using these language choices, Nwapa charges full-steam ahead in the world of letters, helping to represent and empower women.

Flora Nwapa use of language in *Efuru* is one of the most elaborated devices of empowerment, through which African women can raise questions against dominant Western grand narratives on gender, culture, and society. She writes in English intelligently, infusing Igbo expressions, proverbs, and oral traditions into the writing. It signifies that African ways of knowledge and cultural practices are alive while at the same time resisting colonial language and cultural impositions. Nwapa relies on a colonial language in the English language; thus, it would connect her with larger groups only. She only struggles against the power of such a language by interlinking Igbo cultural elements with an assurance that maintains the authenticity and subtlety of African life. The use of proverbs, which denote shared wisdom accented on oral traditions central to Igbo gives a kind of cultural relevance through local idioms and expressions to a view often made very simplistic and exotic in the Western literature on African women.

Nwapa's simplicity of style suits the strength, realism, and pragmatism of her main character, Efuru, whose story dares to deny the Western stereotype of the passive, victimized African woman. Efuru is presented as a character who is economically independent and socially

significant, against the colonial and patriarchal view of African women as peripheral and powerless. The language of Nwapa brings out the autonomous decisions of Efuru and represents her not as some victim for whom the West shows pity but as an active agent of her life and its decisions. Nwapa actually questions and contests the fact instilled in the minds of Western feminists that African women need to be saved from their respective cultures. Instead, she portrays how strong, autonomous, and influential women were in pre-colonial societies.

More importantly, the linguistic choices in Efuru are an indictment of the Western colonial discourses that constantly diminished African paradigms and replaced them with a very rigid standard of patriarchy. The conscious use that Nwapa has made from Igbo belief systems, rites, and religious life typified by the worship of Uhamiri, the lake goddess, speaks particularly to an African experience. By praising a female deity and rejoicing in the spiritual and communal roles of women, Nwapa rebels against the Christian, patriarchal structures of colonial rule that devalued and denied African women's individual and collective power. Often allowing her narration to be guided by a unified communal voice, Nwapa urges readers to begin perceiving African culture from within rather than through the distorted lens of colonialism. By this, Nwapa recovers the stories of African women, placing them as agents in their history rather than just victims.

The innovations that Nwapa employs with the linguistic approach go in complete opposition to the reigning fancies of Western literary approaches that are mostly oriented to express individualism at the cost of communal values. *Efuru,* through dialogues, folklore, and general shared cultural narratives, highlights their interconnectedness, standing firm and fighting colonization as one. This sets up a marked divergence from the Western emphasis on the private individual and, hence, another narrative framework that emphasizes community and collective cultural identity. Through the integration of Igbo cultural expressions into the English language, Nwapa not only empowers African women by reclaiming their voices but also contests Western literary and cultural hegemony by illuminating the validity and depth of African viewpoints. It is, ultimately, this innovative use of language that makes Nwapa's *Efuru* an instrument of activism in recasting the images of African women, challenging the narration of colonialism, and validating the position of Indigenous thought systems.

2.11 From Self-Awareness to Self-Realization a Path Towards Identity:

Flora Nwapa set out to create a world of women who were independent, self-reliant, generous, and full of life through her first novel. Efuru is the main heroine, brought out as a morally upright and strong character who actively reaches out to her community with various acts of assistance and compassion but with boundless respect and regard. All at once, Efuru stands for independence and new thinking, never fearing to break taboos and defy norms and expectations.

Through it all, Efuru evolves from a naive little girl to a strong, wise woman. This is reflected in her manner, decisions, and interactions, which are highly definitive of growth, especially in all areas of her life. That role shifts her not just as a woman but also in her ways as a mother and wife, learning afresh what it means to be such with fresher wisdom and insight.

It has been a growth process to make critics like Stratton classify the novel as a 'female Bildungsroman,' a genre where the principal character, Efuru, undergoes the learning process, developmental, and maturational processes. In the evolution of Efuru, Nwapa does not emphasize merely the strength and development of her female protagonist but also the universal themes of individual transformation and self-discovery that strike a harmony among readers from varying backgrounds. (p.131)

2.11.1 Efuru's Self-identity

Efuru in her culture is viewed her as worthless simply because she couldn't have children, a fact that was beyond her control. She had given birth before, but unfortunately, her child developed some illness and died. Even in Igbo society, women play an active role in perpetuating the patriarchy. Women stand with the husband and do not side with the wife. Full of concern and agitation, Omirima charges up to Giblert's mother and launches a verbal attack on her as she expresses misgivings, 'Did Efuru give you medicine that you have lost your senses? You see your only son married to a barren woman, this is the fourth year of the marriage, and you sit down and hope.'(p. 221). Omirima adds: 'But can't the husband do anything about it? He is to blame for letting a woman rule him. I am sorry for him... This news is like a fairy-tale, azigba - woo.'(p. 221).The pervasive tendency among women to conceal and underestimate one another becomes glaringly apparent in this situation. The women in the community were unable to come to terms with the reality that Efuru did not conceive immediately after her marriage. In their perspective, a

woman who lacks productivity is equated to a male, and the notion of "two men do not live together" is emphasised (p. 23). Hence, they pondered and expressed dissatisfaction over her husband's decision not to enter into a new marriage in order to procreate.

Although she entered maturity at a young age, the start of the novel depicts a woman who is already assertive and independent, with her own opinions and ideals. The tale begins with Efuru's desire to marry Adizua, her first husband-to-be. What appears atypical in this situation, as per the Igbo traditions, is not the act of getting married, but rather the choice to marry a man without the prior payment of the bride price.

With the reading of Adizua maltreating his wife and remarrying while the story unravels, it brings back memory of the first encounter and love story of Efuru and Adizua. At the beginning, Efuru agreed to marry him after all because he could afford her dowry. It is, therefore, pointed out, right from the start, that Adizua is, after all, subordinate to his wife, "Efuru was her name. She was a remarkable woman. It was not only that she came from a distinguished family. She has distinguished herself. Her husband was not known and people wondered why she married him" (p. 1) additionally, one of Adizua's friends in the farming said, "Don't you know that he has married a very beautiful woman? How the woman agreed to marry him still remains a mystery to everybody" (p. 7). Similarly, when they saw Efuru after finishing her fasting in the market they wonder, "'Who is Adizua? Who is his father? Is he known?'. And the other one answered: 'He is not known. And nobody knows why she ever married him, and besides, not a cowrie has been paid on her head'" (p. 16).

Due to her contentious stance on Igbo's societal norms, some feminist critics portrayed the main character as a defiant woman. Marriage was a significant ritual in West African customs that entailed the participation of both households. Prior to the wedding, it was obligatory to make the payment of the dowry as a gesture of respect towards the bride's family and to uphold their reputation. Contrary to popular belief, Nnaemeka demonstrated that Efuru and Adizua were not legally married prior to the payment of the bride price; they were simply pretending. The emphasis should be placed on the timing of the payment rather than its uncertainty. Efuru agrees to marry Adizua without receiving payment, but she firmly believes that he must still pay the bride price. According to Nnaemeka, the protagonist assumes the role of a reformer rather than a rebel. She is aware that the payment must be made and desires for it to occur, as failure to do so will result in

her father severing ties with her. However, she is also deeply in love with Adizua and wishes to remain with him. She functions as a reformer by basing her decisions on her own objectives while going against the rules and traditions of her community. The distinctive characteristics of the protagonist possesses a distinct nature that is clearly visible in the perception of her community. They are unable to understand how she could choose to marry a young man with a humble farming background like Adizua' Efuru was her name, she was a remarkable woman. It was not only she that she came from a distinguished family. She was distinguished herself. Her husband was not known and people wondered why she married him" (p.7)

Despite Efuru, she has always played her role as a good wife, which is evident "since he could not afford the dowry. Efuru had to work hard trading in so many things and when they got the money they went and paid the dowry" (p. 110). Nevertheless, their marital situation did not protect her from humiliating conditions imposed by her husband in the later period. In terms of identification, deviating from societal norms is met with social exclusion. In Efuru's community, a mature woman is expected to fulfill the roles as a wife and a would-be mother. When she failed to conceive in her second marriage, the community declared her barren and reproached Gilbert, saying that he should get another wife. This places her in a very dangerous situation, being an outlier and open to as many external comments and judgements as possible, which dent her self-confidence.

Efuru's self-concept and identity are very influential in shaping her actions. As a trading lady, she does not work on farms with her husband, Adizua, but focuses on her own business activity. This decision drew unwarranted criticism from her mother-in-law, Ajanupu, and even from her father, urging her to live like other women. Efuru, however, is always self-conscious and determined to stand up for herself against the ill treatment from her husband. That was possible because she had a strong concept of self that helped her withstand the forces that threatened to railroad her into continuing in a degrading situation. Thus, going against all advice from her elders to endure the marriage and persuade her husband, Efuru acted in an empowered manner, moving out of her husband's household and ensuring that she did not live with less dignity.

As the story develops, Efuru meets more and more challenges; however, she faces them all with a strong heart. First, she loses her husband, who marries another woman. Adizua has long been known to her as a lazy and careless farmer. He lost much more value when he eloped. His

personality is not consistent. Efuru has suffered a huge loss, but still, she handles it with courage. Then, after a year, she loses her beloved daughter. Her life becomes terrible, but she is supported by her mother-in-law. She has had her own space in the house. She is not alienated from her relatives.Efuru begins to develop a new sense of self-importance. She says, "There is a woman behind this indifference. A woman whose personality is greater than mine . . I must face facts (. . .) Perhaps she is very beautiful and has long hair like mine . . . Is she as stately as I am" (p. 54). Efuru is not shocked. She is brave in any situation. Her willpower enables her to rise firmly despite her husband's elopement and the loss of her daughter; she remains the same independent woman. (p.1196-1197)

When her only daughter becomes ill, her feeling of satisfaction is threatened "If she dies, that will mean the end of me" (p.66).The illustration depicts a developing Efuru who is still struggling with her identity. However, the loss of her kid and the sorrow that comes with it do not turn her to a non-person, nor do the failures of her two marriages. She maintains her business and establishes herself as a serious and successful businesswoman. Furthermore, although still married to her second husband, she becomes a dedicated worshipper of the woman of the lake. Thus, even while still married, her other responsibilities minimized her sexual one, leading her in new paths for self-realization. (p-1179.1189)

Alongside her role as a reformer, Efuru's uniqueness was also exemplified by her virtuous, generous, friendly, and charming nature. Chimalum Nwankwo states that Nwapa provided this kind of woman to ensure that the most suitable woman is corresponding with the most suitable man. Through her display of generosity and compassion, Efuru effectively challenges her male rivals. Essentially, the writer aimed to reveal the illogical conduct of males who, despite being eager to do anything for women, yet mistreat them. Nwankwo explicitly declared that:

The typical female protagonist from Efuru […] is saying the following: I will be chaste and demure. I will even accept the brutality of circumcision: I will even allow you, man, to have more women or wives as long as you are gracious enough not to lie about it. I will cook and clean. I will obey all the unequal and baseless idiocies of all patriarchal structures. What do I get from you, man, in return? It is easy for the reader to see the indicting inescapable answer. Nothing. It is easy to see, too, that to give nothing for all this complex of sacrificial giving is fraudulent and irrational (p.205)

Nwankwo explores the complex relationship between African literature and the representation of women, with a specific emphasis on the deliberate use of imagined scenarios as a means of expressing disagreement and promoting empowerment. Nwankwo's analysis highlights the significant impact that literary portrayals can have in challenging cultural norms and promoting gender equality in the African environment. Nwankwo's analysis highlights how imagined realities are used as a narrative method in literature to challenge dominant conventions and amplify the voices of marginalized groups, namely women, in African literary discourse.

Flora Nwapa skillfully explores the complex aspects of women, wife, and mother in her portrayal of Efuru. She presents the protagonist as a contrast to the patriarchal norms that were established by colonialism. At the same time, Nwapa's depiction of women in the narrative surpasses conventional expectations, portraying them as multifaceted persons who possess qualities like resilience, self-reliance, empowerment, empathy, nurturing, and benevolence. This sophisticated portrayal defies traditional standards and provides readers with an insight into the intricacies of everyday women navigating various social environments.

The focus of the novel *Efuru* is on selfhood development and self-realization. It speaks of empowerments associated with mothering within the community, but there are two parts to the novel as it is mentioned before: the first Part of it concerns individual desires: a young woman wants to make her own choices, and the The second half is "corrective and instructive" because Efuru marries Uhamiri, finds a Peaceful existence as a mother in the community. The work depicts the journey of Efuru, exploring her ideological ambiguity, political consciousness, material upbringing, and spiritual growth. Ogunyemi's argument is valid as the novel primarily centres around Efuru's autonomy in decision-making and subsequent assessment of the outcomes. She must assess the impact that her decisions have on both herself and society. (p.147)

In *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa succeeds in representing the various realities of women in Igbo society, bringing out the important role that culture has played in influencing the formation of a woman's identity. Besides other examples, it is the character of Efuru that gives an intense portrait of how societal expectations about identity can be a source of pain in forming one's personal identity. By placing Efuru in a condition of lack awareness, unconsciousness and adjustment, her cultural exposure is attributed to her limited exposure to outside influences in Nwapa's story.

Nwapa presents a tale of internalized social control through examples of her attempting to balance social obligations against her own aims.

The characters in the story conform to established conventions without consciously acknowledging them. This depiction emphasises the complex interaction between deeply rooted belief systems and real-life experiences, indicating that a change in one's views has the ability to redefine personal paths and enable characters to surpass conventional limitations. Nwapa's examination of these themes emphasizes the influential capacity of changing cultural models to reform personal autonomy and sense of self within the intricate social structure of Igbo society.

The story delves into the transitional phase that appears after a serious loss is encountered, as exemplified by the loss of Efuru's daughter. This is well elaborated by the hyperactive senses of the character. Flora uses this incident to initiate progress and development in the process of self-actualization. The feeling of mourning and the act of moving forward blend with the representation to become a symbol of hope for change. Nwapa tells about a very painful experience with oppression, leading her to the conclusion that her life is not limited by the cultural principle of Igbo society that a woman has to be the servant of all of the others without satisfying one's own needs. Such regard for these needs, leaves women empty and without their identity.

Nwapa elaborates on the oppression of Igbo women by analyzing how they are portrayed in texts as objects and frequently as one among many spouses. Efuru, who is unable to conceive with her husband, is quickly labelled as infertile and is subjected to the belief that two men cannot coexist. This picture illustrates that in Igbo culture, women are primarily expected to fulfil the obligations of parenting and wifehood, emphasizing their effectiveness in these roles rather than pursuing individual enjoyment outside of these socially prescribed responsibilities. This example demonstrates that colonialism has intensified patriarchal gender relations and that patriarchal governance mirrors that of the nation-state.

Efuru, the heroine undergoes a development process, and one such crisis she goes through is that of madness; it serves as the means to enable her to meet with the societal and cultural constructs surrounding her reality. That very moment signals Efuru approaching the path of a more assertive and independent being, even if it has to be somewhat radical compared to societal standards. At the beginning of the novel, Efuru is in a codependent state, and this can be analysed through her relationship with her partner "that she would drown herself in the lake if he did not

marry her" (P.7). But with time, experiences, and challenges, the character gradually moves to an empowered and self-aware stance. This change underscores her resilience and readiness to learn the ropes of her social environment and develop her new identity and agency. Following her marriage, Efuru's inability to conceive within the first year leads to her being a topic of discussion among the neighbours , "To them Efuru was a man since she could not reproduce" (p.24).

Nwapa describes how, in this alternate representation of Igbo cultural standards, the identity of a woman is again bound to marriage and childbearing. As the story unfolds, Efuru can find happiness only in the fulfilment of such expectations, which she allows others to place upon her. Nwapa insists that self-realization is blocked off from human beings the moment they begin to act out established socially defined roles of emotion without any deliberateness.

One of the most important scenes in the novel is that when Nwapa highlights Efuru's absence of self-awareness when she becomes a mother, she is happy when she eventually has a kid. She now feels whole as a woman:

> Efuru lay there thinking of it all, "Is this happening to me or someone I know. Is that baby mine or somebody else's? Is it really true that I have had a baby, that I am a woman after all. Perhaps I am dreaming. I shall soon wake up and discover that it is not real……Tell me how it happened. I was fast asleep" (p.31-32)

The passage highlights that Efuru has assumed the position of a female member in her culture without being consciously aware of it. Efuru exhibits a strong emotional attachment to her daughter. When her only daughter becomes ill, her feeling of satisfaction is threatened "What will I do if I lose her?" and "If she dies, that will mean the end of me" (p.66), The illustration depicts a developing Efuru who is still struggling with her identity. Immediately after the death of her kid, when Efuru breaks down and cries on the floor—feeling overwhelmingly grieved "threw herself on the floor…and wept hysterically" (p.69), This intense, deep emotional suffering that Efuru had to go through due to her sorrowful loss is vividly brought out in this unvarnished display of pain and despair, "My daughter has killed me. Why should I live?" (p.73). Nwapa presents Efuru's distressing encounter as an indication that the protagonist has not yet fully developed an autonomous sense of self.

Efuru, who has been accustomed to deciding her own identity and that of her child as inseparable, experiences the nonappearance of her child as a lack of her own sense of self and desires to eradicate any proof that her physical existence reflects a contrasting truth. However, Efuru seizes this opportunity and advances by taking pivotal steps to alleviate the void she experienced after her daughter's death. The encounter with previous roles is the starting point of the change. Nwapa's precise portrayal of Efuru's expedition illustrates the ability of women to go into the realm of the unknown and emerge with enhanced self-consciousness and self-awareness.

Efuru starts a new life when she participates in the ritual purification of water following the death of her daughter with:

> Meanwhile Efuru's age- group took her to the Stream to have her body thoroughly cleansed after weeping for her dead daughter. Efuru was given a new sponge and new soap, and she scrubbed her body well. while she was washing, one of the members of Her age group washed her clothes (p.77)

Nwapa uses this tragic ceremony as a symbol of a renewal process within Efuru, highlighting her journey towards transformation. At this crucial moment, Efuru develops a fresh and unwavering resolve, which empowers her to use this strength in several areas of her life. During the process of emotional maturation and self-exploration, Efuru consciously undergoes personal development, gradually accepting and empowering herself through gradual shifts.

After realizing Adizua's unfaithfulness, she displays her newfound strength by leaving him. Nwapa demonstrates to readers that embracing transitory insaneness contributes to the development of stronger identities and greater awareness of its transient nature. The author argues that while Efuru's ability to move freely allows her to develop her own identity, it also requires her to separate from the oppressive reality of colonial and patriarchal society.

In the novel, Nwapa uses metaphor, stories, and dreams to expose the importance and difficulty of escaping oppressive environments. She also explores the persistent effort required to overcome this crisis. Nwapa skillfully incorporated story, metaphor, and dreams into the plot to illustrate the challenges that Efuru faces as she shifts from her previous existence to forge a deliberate new persona. Efuru returns to her father's residence during a period of transition

following her separation from her first spouse. During her visit, she briefly takes over her mother's room:

> The next day, Efuru packed up all her things and took them from Adizua's house to her father's house. Her room was still empty.It was her mother's room. She swept it and rubbed it with red mud and charcoal. Then she rubbed the sitting-room floor and the walls. She used white clay for the walls and put in very beautiful design (p.88-89)

This particular occurrence of rectifying, purifying, and reconstructing the environment portrays the surreal stage of transforming one's sense of self as Efuru navigates between her interior need for transformation (reflection) and combines it with external efforts to establish her determination. Nwapa employs Efuru's homecoming as a metaphor for her confrontation with her history and as proof of her character's journey towards self-realization and personal growth, signifying a rebirth.

Subsequently in the narrative, Efuru enters into marriage with a second spouse, Eneberi, who first shows kind behavior towards her. As time goes on, Efuru experiences infertility and seeks medical advice from a doctor. She recounts a dream she had to the Doctor:

> I was swimming in the lake, when a fish raised its head and asked me to follow it… I got to the bottom of the lake and to my surprise, I saw an elegant woman, very beautiful, combing her long black hair with a golden comb. When she saw me, she stopped combing her hair and smiled at me and asked me to come in (p.146)

Nwapa uses this dream narrative as a metaphor to signify that Efuru has achieved the strength to be a self-reliant and independent woman. Rather than feeling unhappy about being unable to get pregnant, she discovers satisfaction in her newly found purpose, which was placed in her through the dream. Her father recount, "You see, your mother had similar dreams. Now that you are here, I recall these dreams of your mother. Your mother prospered in her trade. She was so good that whatever she put her hand to money flowed in" (p.149). Nwapa illustrates the process of progress over different generations with this example, while also clarifying the connection between desires and the eventual manifestation of those dreams in the future. Following her dream, Efuru decides to pursue the woman of the lake. Efuru has continued the path that her mother started, transforming her own aspirations into tangible achievements.

Nwapa further relates, through Efuru's forward movement, that a woman willing to act independently and challenge socially defined roles can become a force for cultural change as she leads others to healing. When Efuru is on her own, she heals injuries because she has cured similar pain inside herself. At one point, Efuru makes the effort to get a doctor's help for a woman whose leg needs to be healed. The doctor relates to Efuru: "'It will take a long time to heal... She had a bad sore, and she allowed it to eat into the bones" (p,129). Though Efuru leads others to help, Nwapa comments on the importance of action and belief on the part of the individual wanting to heal, "No medicine will heal her. She will have to sacrifice to the ancestors," and the dibia follows with the details of the sacrifice and notes the necessity of action, «She must do it herself. So I am told. It won't be effective if she does not do it herself" (p,159). Nwapa uses this metaphor to describe how important it is to pair spiritual intentions with intentional personal action in order to manifest desired growth, but also to remark on how painful it can be when one makes changes from stagnation to progression in identity.

In the tale, Efuru ultimately decides to leave her spouse once she becomes ill herself, "Efuru suddenly took ill. For three days, she was unable to get up from her bed. The illness was so sudden that everybody was afraid" (p.215). Her illness was a puzzle, no one could do anything, despite the dibias super power they stayed powerless, and Efuru gets worse and worse.

Finally, according to the dibia, the illness is a result of Efuru's disrespect for the woman of the lake, and she must "appease" her by making a sacrifice of her own. (p.215). When she left her husband she said, "I was cured" (p.221). Despite the societal pressure riding on her to be traditional and go back to her husband, Efuru feels these expectations are betrayals that will bring about her ultimate death. She feels these propositions as threats to her freedom and survival, for she realizes the power of personal devastation that would result if she were to yield to pressures and give up her own will. This, therefore, is a kind of revolt against society, which shows Efuru's strength and will in forging her path through significant resistance. The reader may notice that it is explicitly stated that in order to maintain her independence, Efuru's persona must stay alone, detached from her social and cultural environment.

Nwapa emphasizes the progression of Efuru's character towards autonomy as she embarks on a journey guided by the woman of the lake, a path designed to defy patriarchal subjugation and the lack of personal growth. Through Efuru's choice to follow the woman of the lake, Nwapa

suggests that she has chosen a path leading to certain independence. For Nwapa, being in this state of disconnection is a decision that keeps Efuru away from this "destiny".

After expressing her desire to live as an unmarried woman, Efuru experienced a deep and peaceful sleep that night. During her slumber, she had a dream about the woman who lives in the lake. Once more, she is submerged into the lake and witnesses the formidable might possessed by this woman:

> Efuru slept soundly that night. She dreamt of the woman of the lake, her beauty, her long here and her riches. She had lived for ages at the bottom of the lake. She was as old as the lake itself. She was happy. She was wealthy. She was beautiful. She gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood (p.221)

Nwapa depicts Efuru as a lady who possesses the ability to rise above limitations and achieve a higher state, while nevertheless maintaining a strong connection to her origins. These portrayals indicate that Efuru's transcendence is marked by detachment, exemplifying an extreme form of being that arises from the effects of colonialism and patriarchal subjugation. The move from co-dependence to transcendence represents advancement, but in the novel, this type of transcendence is shown not as an ultimate goal, but rather as a temporary phase that fosters further growth in the building of one's identity and achieving self-realization.

Nwapa demonstrates that in order to achieve her elevated state, Efuru isolates herself from society and renounces her connections to customary cultural duties, like as marriage and motherhood. By linking herself with the woman of the lake, Efuru sets out on a path towards self-realization as a healer. Nevertheless, in order to maintain her elevated condition, Nwapa portrays Efuru as being in a profound state of detachment; despite her capacity to heal others, she herself remains incompletely healed.

Efuru's final acceptance as a follower of the barren deity Uhamiri comes after a number of attempts to manipulate a compromised existence within a traditional setting. The behaviours of the characters allude to a sense of understanding indicative of a relationship relating to contemporary experience and tradition. "The voice speaks to us from the past," explains Gadamer (p.374), leaving the individual in search of answers. The female protagonist can make various choices within the confines of her nature, but she keeps evaluating the consequences of her actions for

herself and society. At times, personal satisfaction has to take the front seat. However, the woman goes on living within society, an indication that she wants to be accepted by the community as her true self.

In *Efuru's* story, she assumes the role of the community's nurturing mother. Nwapa allows all of her female characters, such as Idu, Efuru, Ajanupu, and Amaka(protagonists of Nwapa's novel), to assume the privileging of the other self, which at times is not embraced within the community. It is that concept, found in Idu's character in Nwapa's second novel, that privileges this 'other self'.

2.11.2 Efuru's Financial Empowerment and her Journey to Self-Realization

The financial autonomy of women in Africa presents a significant challenge. Traditionally, women are assigned roles centered around procreation and household management, necessitating that any endeavors they pursue receive approval from the family as a whole and specifically from their husbands. In this regard, husbands can at will withdraw wives from income-generating activities. This has influenced scholars to study the factors that hinder women's emancipation and economic independence. Decades of systemic marginalization and a non-conducive environment for women's liberation have led to a number of neologisms that characterize this era, such as emancipation, feminism, and gender empowerment.

Efuru, who from the very beginning of the novel represents to us as an unusual, beautiful, smart, intelligent, and independent woman. The very beginning of the novel revolves around her most autonomous action. Despite living in a male-dominated society, the narrative demonstrates that she is afforded independence in the community. (Chekhnaba & Mehdaoui, 2023, p. 1195). Additionally, Efuru is also self-sufficient, she is a wonderful, successful businesswoman and she is very generous to her community (Chekhnaba & Mehdaoui, 2023, p. 1198). Her achievement as a successful businesswoman is followed by different characteristics .

The economic independence of women, particularly in Africa, is a significant obstacle. Traditional responsibilities, such as procreation and managing household affairs, are assigned to women. Any actions they take must receive approval from the family as a whole, and especially from the husband. The husband can revoke his wife's self-generating activities at will at any particular moment. As such, authors have analyzed the issue by reviewing the circumstances

leading to women's emancipation and economic freedom. The marginalization of women for several years and the intentional failure to create the circumstances that would lead to women's emancipation have been so deeply rooted that several new terminologies have emerged, like emancipation, feminism, and gender empowerment.

The reader may infer that Efuru's initial resources or capital might be attributed to her inheritance from her mother or the savings she accumulated before marrying Adizua. Following the harvest, Adizua has brought very little back to his home due to his laziness and aversion to agricultural labor. The narrator confirms this situation, "So, after the harvest, Adizua left the farm for good. His harvest was of course very poor. His fellow-farmers laughed at him and said unkind words behind his back. He did not make any profit at all" (p. 20). This therefore means that Efuru raises capital for her trade with the money she got from selling her parents' house. Though it is not directly stated, it can also be assumed that she resolves to start trading in resources as a result of the financial situation of her husband. The reader can also make an assumption that she has borrowed money elsewhere. However, this claim can be dismissed because the novel does not indicate that debtors have asked Efuru to refund those who owe her money.

The primary fundamental requirement in society is sustenance; hence, engaging in commerce within this realm will prove advantageous for her and her family. She actively seizes every opportunity to engage in the buying and selling of various agricultural products, such as yams, groundnuts, and maize. During the dry season, citizens heavily rely on grain, seafood, and crayfish as essential ingredients for cooking. Therefore, Efuru possesses a keen perception of favorable circumstances. She possesses a clear understanding of her wealth, skills, and ability to excel in the field of commerce. She is aware of her ability to generate income independently and achieve financial success. Therefore, her aspiration is to become a successful tradeswoman.

The second characteristics as Efuru an industrious woman and as a successful tradeswoman is that her courage to pursuit her trade even after being circumcised. For example, after having been circumcised, her mother-in-law offers that she should celebrate for two months; however, Efuru declines the offer since she probably finds this to be a period of idleness, non-productivity, and perhaps boredom too. The following quotation illustrates this point:

Since you won't continue feasting, we shall talk about going to the market,' her mother-in-law told her one day. 'But if I were you, Efuru, I should continue for another one month.

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When I did mine, I feasted for three months. I know I cannot do for you all that my own mother did for me, but I will try" (p.17).

The following passage clearly shows that Efuru's mother-in-law acknowledges her as a hardworking woman. Instead of changing her attitude when her mother-in-law advised her to continue with the feasting, Efuru states, "No mother, one month of confinement is enough. We have not got much money, and I want to start trading. Again, we have not paid the dowry yet. I shall go to market on Nkwo day" (p. 17-18).

The third feature of Efuru as an industrious woman is her collaboration. She believes that a partnership with her husband should be mutually beneficial, so she decides to work with Adizua. Collaboration in business is very important, as the saying goes: "two heads are better than one." The author of Nwapa's novel stresses this idea of collaboration:

Efuru and her husband traded in yams. They would paddle a canoe from their town to a tributary of the Great River, and thence to Agbor. There, they bought yams and other things rare in their town and sold them at a profit. When the yam trade was bad, they traded in dry fish and crayfish. It was in crayfish that they made their fortune (p. 20-21).

Evidently, one can note that Efuru proves her possibility of working with her husband within the patriarchy she lives in, which in general means that both men and women have to cooperate for the sake of society.

The fourth characteristic is Efuru's determination. The protagonist of the novel, Efuru, was a woman of will and purpose. Some might think of attributing this sterling quality of hers to her co-partnership with her husband in their business; this can amount to a serious error in judgment. One can justifiably prove that she has inherited the genes of entrepreneurship and trading from her parents. This is an inherent ability and seems to be part of Efuru's personality, as evidenced by this statement, How the woman agreed to marry him [Adizua] . […]. 'How? Is that woman from a very good family?''The daughter of Nwashike Ogene, the mighty man of valour. […]. And what is more, no man has ever seen his back on the ground (p. 11).

Apart from her physical beauty, Efuru has also inherited the business acumen of her mother. Her mother is portrayed as a very successful and principled businesswoman. We get from the conversation between Efuru and her father details about the physical attributes and moral character

of her mother, "You see, your mother had similar dreams […]. Your mother prospered in her trade. She was so good that whatever she put her hand to money flowed in. […]. Then she took titles" (p. 149-50).

Similarly, Efuru is a real businesswoman because she seized the opportunities immediately and altered her behavior at the slightest feeling or intuition of a change in the market," they [Efuru and her husband] were the first to discover the trade (of crayfish) that year. The place where they bought the crayfish was three days' journey on the Great River." (p. 20).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remark that training holds significant importance in the field of business. Undoubtedly Flora Nwapa's mentioned this explicitly, "The fifth trip was not so good. Many women had got to know about the business and had rushed into it and spoilt it. It was by sheer luck that Efuru and her husband recovered their capital" (p. 21)

In fact, the training could have made Efuru range her trade. Unfortunately, this is one of the characteristics of African women's business environments, where as soon as a businesswoman flourishes and achieves success in a given business, all the others rush up to the same business and then saturate the market instead of innovating. According to the law of the market and the law of supply and demand, prices collapse, and then losses appear because the seller cannot even recover his or her capital. Undoubtedly, Efuru is the one who gives instructions regarding the trading. She shows leadership. After the fifth trip, which is unsuccessful, she becomes desperate and seeks to give up the trips. The quotation below is an illustration:

> We won't go again,' she told her husband 'Yes, we won't go again. But what are we going to do?' 'We are going to look for another trade. These women spoil trade so easily. When they see you making a profit in one trade, they leave the trade they know and join you of course, in no time, it is no longer profitable. So, we shall look for another thing to do, but we have to go to my father now that we have money. (p. 21)

Efuru is the driving force behind the fish business because her husband is completely unskilled at trade and is portrayed as a subordinate to his wife, as indicated, "Adizua was not good at trading. It was Efuru who was the brain behind the business. He knew this very well […] . You have to think over this, my dear wife. I have thought of it. You are right. […]. We are not only making no profits but we are losing our capital." (p. 36)

Furthermore, Efuru masters business language that brings her much profit.in one of her conversations, she states, I shall get a good one. I want to help my husband. We have been losing much money" (p. 37). Efuru possesses the qualities of success and effective decision-making, which are vital qualities for a woman in business and new characteristics of a successful businesswoman. That is the reason she is an outstanding businesswoman. Gilbert's mother describes this fact, "Any trade she put her hand to was profitable. […]. Efuru advised him that buying a canoe would be better at that stage so they bought a canoe and gave it out on hire and this fetched money for them. […] when Efuru saw that they could afford to build a house they began the house." (p. 136)

Efuru is ambitious, but she also has a sense of priority. For her, a prudent businesswoman, the choice between building a house and buying a canoe is, without doubt, very clear. Doubtless, building an expansive, beautiful house is largely inspired by the need for social status. For several individuals, it serves as a tangible representation of their richness and a means of showing their financial standing. However, the main protagonist, Efuru, does not engage in the act of flaunting or exposing herself. In addition, constructing a house is a challenging endeavor, as it requires a substantial number of financial resources and entails significant potential dangers of stopping progress at any time. Following the purchase of a canoe and its subsequent rental, Efuru and her newlywed husband have not only generated additional income, but they have also acquired a second canoe. After a certain amount of time, they embarked on their own business of constructing their own canoe.

Efuru possesses a forward-looking vision. She exceeds both her contemporaries and her subsequent partners, Adizua and Gilbert. She exhibits an intentional strategy for completing tasks. She is the intellectual powerhouse behind her collaborative business with her consecutive husbands. She avoids imposing herself or expressing her opinion forcefully, yet she successfully conveys her purpose to her companions, Adizua or Gilbert. She asserts her leadership by persuading people to comply with her desires while also encouraging them to demonstrate their unique strengths. She has never expressed her dissatisfaction by disparaging Adizua as lazy or by criticizing Gilbert.

Finally, the reader may notice that Efuru is really a great social businesswoman, she is very generous to her community, she provides help, whenever it is needed, not only this, she can give

money to others without profit or self-interest. Efuru is really a traditional businesswoman in which she creates her destiny in a very individual way through her industry. Industry that she does not learn at school, which comes from the Igbo culture especially when women are not known to be good traders, they are not well-known as market traders and that's exactly what Efuru does. (Chekhnaba & Mehdaoui, 2023, p. 1198).

2.12 Efuru as a Representation of African Feminism and Womanism

Flora Nwapa's first novel, *Efuru,* is undeniably a feminist piece of literature, as the main character Efuru grapples with her feminism while facing the constraints of her cultural environment. The novel illustrates the concept of "Nego-feminism," in which Efuru recognizes the expectations of tradition while also following her individual aspirations as a woman who aspires to marry the guy she truly loves. She considers herself not completely married until her husband and his family have fully paid her wedding price. Efuru skillfully treads through the cultural confines of patriarchal society while keeping her womanhood intact. It is Nnaemeka's expression of this relationship that places Nwapa's novel as an authentic expression of African feminism.

Nwapa arose as a leader for a group of African women authors who started to assert their voices during a time when literature was mostly controlled by men. African women were commonly shown as a subordinate and marginalized population with limited power, often accepting their oppressed condition. African women were often portrayed by many Western researchers as being voiceless and unnoticed, implying that their stories should be told by Western male and female writers. Nevertheless, African women defied this depiction by assuming the duty to genuinely depict their own lives and experiences as they truly are.

Flora Nwapa has entered her literary career with a strong determination to blow up the mantle of silence that has prevailed over African women. She denounces that African woman, rendered subalterns, are voiceless and creates strong, realistic female characters in her narratives who turn out to be defiant towards oppression. Nwapa's literature tends to shed light on the hard reality Igbo women face in Nigeria, thereby bringing the actual extent of their distressing situations into the spotlight. Therefore, Nwapa's publication of *Efuru* in 1966 was a mark of enormous success in that she boldly stepped beyond the boundaries of silence and opened the way for other women to express their experiences through writing.

The literary work by Nwapa provided a platform for her to engage in culturally taboo behavior: questioning unquestioned traditions that encourage women's marginalization such as polygamy, male child preference and circumcision in Igbo society. By centering women within her narrative structures, Nwapa revolutionizes the art of storytelling around the complexities of female experience and critiques dominant social mores that bind and oppress women. Her ability to create characters allows for a deep investigation into womanhood and a critique of traditions set in stone, giving birth to newness in literary expression that raises women's voices and experiences

The work of Flora Nwapa will have to be reconceptualized through the prism of third-world feminism, an outgrowth of the failures and needs of Western mainstream feminism. Indeed, Western feminism often remains blind to the complex interactions of class, race, emotions, and cultural logics in which people live. It simplifies the oppression most women face and attributes it to gender, ignoring the unique and varied challenges women face in different parts of the world. Chandra Mohanty has written a very thought-provoking paper *entitled Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,* in which she critiques Western feminism for being ethnocentric in nature and hence grossly distorting perceptions of third-world women and their problems.

Opposed to this, third-world feminism attempts to give priority to the voices and experiences of women from the margins. It aims to provide nuanced and well-located descriptions of their oppression and forms of resistance. This kind of feminism, therefore, lays more emphasis on the experiences and analysis of women in developing nations, where they are being subdued under a different nature of oppression based on their cultural and national contexts. Third-world feminism emphasises the necessity of understanding the various types of challenges women face in the Global South. It puts forward how complex the experience of women is and how they use various modes of resistance to move through their political and social situations. The idea is borne out in Flora Nwapa's art, where she does just that,she shows the intricate struggles and triumphs of African women within their context, thereby offering a more inclusive and comprehensive conversation on feminism.

Therefore, Nwapa highlights the Igbo norms that oppress women, including courting, marriage, circumcision, procreation, motherhood, infertility, children, polygamy, and divorce. Nwapa's works aim to challenge the portrayal of African women as voiceless, a stereotype

perpetuated by male writers. Nwapa's introduction novel, *Efuru* is portrayed as a great lady, expressive in her personality, with a loud and clear voice, "Efuru was her name. She was a great woman. Not only did she belong to a distinguished family, but she was also distinguished by herself"(p.7). In fact, her outstanding talent and attractive comportment have won the respect of the whole village.

Efuru defies conventional norms and chooses to marry the guy she loves. She is a self-sufficient and autonomous woman who serves as an inspiration for societal transformation. Nwapa depicts Efuru as a lady whose behaviour signifies a necessity for transformation within the community. Nevertheless, Efuru demonstrates her respect for traditional practices by marrying the man of her choice without requesting agreement. However, she assists her husband in collecting the funds necessary to give her father the dowry. Nwapa expresses her objection to the practice of exploiting daughters for financial gain under the excuse of a bridal price or dowry, "Now a man who has four grown up daughters counts himself a very wealthy man. Each daughter will bring to the father at least a hundred pounds in cash, in raw cash"(p.191)

Nwapa also opposes reducing the responsibilities of women exclusively to those of mothers and wives. She presents an image of women with their various positions and contributions to society. Efuru demonstrates skill in commerce and provides financial assistance to individuals within her community. Additionally, she fulfils the role of a supportive and faithful wife to her husband:

> Gilbert loved and respected her (Efuru). Efuru on the other hand knew the duties of a wife. She did not for one moment slack in her duties. She did not only take good care of her husband, she was sweet to her mother-in-law…. So Gilbert's mother considered herself lucky to have Efuru as her daughter-in-law. She confined in her and treated her as her own daughter…. But what pleased gilbert's mother most was the fact that since her son had married Efuru things had moved well for him. Any trade she put her hand to was profitable. Soon Gilbert began to contemplate building a house of his own and buying a canoe.

Nwapa challenges the conventional notion that marriage is a woman's central issue in life. In creating the character of Efuru, who contracts two marriages only to leave them when they fall apart, Nwapa destroys the social view that a woman's value is essentially based on her married status. The fact that Efuru deliberately chooses to live and be independent underlines Nwapa's

rejection of the notion that, without a husband, a woman is out of significance and value. Instead, Efuru forges her way to economic success and self-actualization and thus embodies the story of competence and independence.

She was demonstrating to everyone that a woman's primary goal is not just marriage and having children as the ultimate fulfilment of marriage. She emphasized that women can find their sense of self and accomplish their personal identities through other means. Furthermore, she emphasized that a woman can still feel whole and fulfilled even if she remains unmarried or unable to have children. Efuru's mother-in-law praises her positive qualities after her son fled her for another lady:

> My life has been one long suffering. The bright part of it came when my son married Efuru. But Adizua hated me. He did not want me to be happy, and so denied me that happiness I found in his marriage with Efuru. My son left his wife and ran away with a worthless woman (p.157).

Flora Nwapa examines the cultural tradition of ritual bathing linked to circumcision or clitoridectomy in Igbo society . This tradition requires that every mother participates in the ritual to protect the kid before to childbirth, " she did not have her bath before she had that baby who died after the dreadful flood…. She was afraid. Foolish girl. She had a foolish mother, their folly cost them a son, a good son" (p. 14). Efuru agrees to the practice without engaging in any form of dispute, while Nwapa provides us with an extensive description of how it works, : "Efuru screamed and screamed. It was painful. Her mother-in-law consoled her. It will soon be over, my daughter, don't cry.' Meanwhile, Efuru's husband was in his room. He felt all the pain. It looked as if he were the one being circumcised" (p.14).

After this important circumstance Efuru has proven to her family and the whole community that she is competent and she has passed the path from a girl to a mature woman. Later on ,her period of rest ,she decides to go back work ,even though the traditions and customs obliged women to rest more than two months . It is evident that Efuru does not oppose circumcision, but she expresses her opinion on when she will start going to the market and has stopped engaging in feasts. Efuru, despite her mother-in-law's desire for her to continue feasting for two months due to societal expectations, chooses to go to the market after only one month, "Never mind what people would say…. One month of confinement is enough. We have not got much money, and I want to

start trading. Again, we have not paid the dowry yet. I shall go to the market on Nkwo day" (p.17-18).

Much has been written on circumcision and its effect on women. In the West, this practice is viewed by women as brutal and inhuman. However, African women do not unite in rebelling against this practice since, according to them, it is a cultural practice. Nwapa's criticism The presence of circumcision in the novel is ironical. Elizabeth Bekers explains:

> In fact, in Efuru, the rationale of the rite's existence is never questioned- not by any of the characters nor by the narrator- not even when Efuru's "bath" fails to offer the post-natal protection it promises for mother and child. Efuru's infant child dies and Efuru is never granted another chance at experiencing "the joy of motherhood"(p.49-50).

Nwapa explains in her work that, according to Igbo, circumcision is carried out in order to prevent the death of a child. On the contrary, Efuru's daughter dies after being circumcised. The author, Nwapa, implicitly questions the continued practice of circumcision, expressing no confidence in its worth or importance.

Motherhood has consistently served as the primary foundation of identity for women in African literature, regardless of whether the authors are male or female. Efuru is regarded as a resilient and accomplished lady, although she is unable to liberate herself from the constraints of societal customs. In the few years following Efuru's initial marriage to Adizua, Efuru perceives herself as a disappointment. She experiences numerous days of lack of sleep due to her preoccupation with her infertility. In her society, childlessness and infertility are perceived as a kind of failure. Nevertheless, in Efuru's community, the inability to have children was regarded as a negative social label, and women who were unable to conceive were seen as being similar to men ,"they did not see the reason why Adizua should not marry another woman since, according to them, two men do not live together. To them Efuru was a man since she could not reproduce" (p.24). Efuru had psychological trauma due to her infertility and her efforts to adhere to her cultural customs. And her marriage starts to fall apart.

Meanwhile, she gave birth to a baby, but quickly develops a fever and passes away. Adizua misses his daughter's funeral and Efuru patiently waits for him a year, but he never returns.

Consequently, she makes the decision to move to her father's house, symbolizing the ending of her marriage.

Subsequently, Efuru enters into a second marriage with Gilbert, and the issue of motherhood becomes of significant importance in her second marriage as well. After a period of time, Efuru remains unable to have a child, which leads to the emergence of talkers who begin to spread rumors about her. These voices exemplify the collective voice of the community:

> The important thing is that nothing has happened since the happy marriage. We are not going to eat happy marriage. Marriage must be fruitful. Of what use is it if it is not fruitful? Of what use is it if your husband licks your body, worships you and buys everything in the market for you and you are not productive? (p.137)

Efuru experiences the same tragic event again with her second spouse, Gilbert. She is faced with the recurring predicament of being infertile and, even worse, being accused of adultery by her husband, "Efuru, my wife, the gods are angry with you because you are guilty of adultery, and unless you confess, you will die. [.....] , you will still be my wife, and I won't allow anybody to molest you. So confess and live" (p.274-275)

Love is one of the most restricted privileges for women, and Efuru suffers through it. She readily and instantly submits to her husband bringing other wives' home on both occasions. She loved both men she was married to, but at the same time, she never forgot that she was also a human being with rights as a woman. She says, after the failure of both her marriages: "I have ended where began, in my father house. The difference is that now my father is dead"(p.280)

Nevertheless, Efuru experienced not only the subjugation and oppression imposed by her spouse but also the traditions observed in Igbo society,which treats women as an objects dominated by men ,for instance, when Efuru and Adizua went to follow the customs of their marriage ,during the meeting, adizua offers a drink to her and the whole attendees shouted : "Kneel down, kneel down, you are a woman" (p.23). This signifies woman's situation vis a vis man.

To clarify, Efuru experienced the collapse of both her marriages and the unfortunate loss of her only child and father. However, despite the challenges posed by her own patriarchal society, she continues to exhibit great strength and achieve remarkable accomplishment. This identifies Efuru's self-development as a black woman.

One important issue that Nwapa raises in her novel is gender preference. A male child is more important and valued than a female child. This tradition of preference for male children was depicted by Nwapa through *Efuru*. where a group of young girls thank Nwabata for his narrative, "Thank you very much…. A boy will be born to your wife" (p.103). This statement shows that a boy is considered a superior gift to a girl. Though these girls are supposed to be providers for their gender, they wish that the man have a boy since they know that boys, in their society, are more valued than girls.

Preference is also given to boys' education when the resources are not enough, and girls are denied education. Nwapa provides an unproblematic picture of women in Efuru. This discrimination is epitomised in the discussion between Eneberi and his friend. Sunday: Sunday sends his sister to school and has this conversation with Eneber:

> It is a good thing that you are sending her to school. But it is a waste of time sending them to school you know'… boys should be given the preference if it comes to that. If you had a little brother for instance and there is just enough money for the training of one, you wouldn't train Nkoyeni and leave the boy.' Sunday replies: 'You are right.' 'Sometimes these girls disappoint one, you know?. 'They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted… in the kitchen.' (p.191-192)

Men see that the most vital role women play in the family is besides Raising children is the rearing of these children. This role is, at times, perceived as limiting and confining to women. Nwapa refers to a good upbringing in her novel Efuru. There is special care given by women to girls who are to be wives and mothers. Efuru's mother-in-law expresses further disappointment with Efuru's maidservant, saying: " It is that silly girl, Ogea. She washed my wrappers and all of them will have to be washed again because there is still black soap on all of them. How is it that a grown-up girl like that is not able to wash clothes properly? How can she live in a man's house?" (p. 181).

Through the progress of the novel, the reader may notice that female characters experience hardship and oppression, for instance Ossai, said,"My life has been one long suffering. The bright part of it came when my son married Efuru. But Adizua hated me. He hates me just as his father hated me […] My son left his wife and ran away with a worthless woman. [….]But I have suffered as nobody has suffered before".(p.197)

Nwapa scrutinizes the bad situations of women by examining their experiences with male characters. She, therefore, stated the importance of mythical tradition that over-empowers male characters and permits them to diminish women to servants and desire objects with no identity or free will.

The feature of womanism is not only existing through Efuru's characters. But it is obvious throughout all the novel. Sister framework, it is about women's community which they build it all together, women are stronger they take care of each other, and they are living in harmony. Efuru's mother-in-law, who is deeply concerned says "You are welcome my daughter "(p. 8).

In Nigerian custom, women constantly help one another. She provides Efuru with complete independence and a secure existence. She is there for her in every circumstance. The mother-in-law does not want Efuru to experience pain as a result of her son"s carelessness. She is also concerned that Efuru may quit the house. She says, "My daughter (. . .) My son has neglected you. But as my sister Ajanupu has advised you wisely, be patient. It pays to be patient. I have been patient myself all my life". (p. 59). On another occasion she tells, ",My daughter, I can only solicit patience. Have patience. You may not wait as long as I did. I gained nothing from my long-suffering, so the world would think, but I am proud that I was and still am true to the only man I loved" (p.61).

Aunt Ajanupu is another prominent character in the story who looks after Efuru in every situation. She has the same viewpoint as her mother-in-law says,

> But don"t worry, it will be all right. By the power of God, it will be all right. Adizua has wronged you . . .Give Adizua just a year, and if he does not come back to you and you have an offer of marriage from another man, with a good background and wealth, leave him and marry the man. Wait for just a year" (p. 83).

Efuru, her mother-in-law, her mother-in-law's sister and other women who might have their politics or their way of looking life but by in large, you can see a very strong sense that the women do from different kinds of support groups in their complicated situation so we do not assume that they are living happy living without conflict but through the novel, you can see certain conflicts and how women dealt with it. (Chekhnaba & Mehdaoui,p1199)

Despite all of her hardships, she chooses to live a quiet life and continues to live as an independent woman of her own identity. Given that spirituality is the central tenet of Walker's Womanism (Izgarjan & Markov, p.314), she abandons her loyalty to Uhamiri, the goddess of the lake. She dreams of Uhamiri: "I dream several nights of the lake and the woman of the lake...I got to the bottom of the lake and to my surprise, I saw an elegant woman, very beautiful, combing her long black hair with a golden comb" (p.183). This identifies the beginning of her worship to Uhamiri. From the start , the Dibia made a prophecy to Nwashike Ogene, " You are a great woman, Nwashike Ogene, your daughter is a great woman. The goddess of the lake has chosen her to be one of her worshippers. It is a great honor. She is going to protect you and shower riches on you. But you must keep her laws". (p.153).

The last passages from the novel, Nwapa explores the idea of Uhamiri that brought everything to her worshipers and was unable to provide Efuru one of her desires and wish, to have children and deprived her from the joy of motherhood. However, Nwapa ironically questioned "why then did women worship her?" (p.281), and at the same time answers, ? rather than give women children, Uhamiri instead grants what she has: "Her beauty, her long hair and her riches she was happy, she was wealthy. She was beautiful. She gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child" (p.281). Nwapa concludes the novel with an open -ending question that make readers think of its answer.

Instead, Uhamiri is an image of hope for all women, so that those who love her, like Efuru, can experience her type of happiness and freedom with or without children. Efuru is so similar to Uhamiri that she can be content without having children. Her independence starts to seem beneficial and desirable. This points to spirituality as the main tenet and subset of Walker's womanism. Thus, spirituality aids in asserting one's purpose and significance in life, maintaining one's stability, and engaging in conflict in a calm, loving manner.

Last and not least, Flora Nwapa is an interesting figure in the Nigerian letter she publishes this novel and so many others, she was also an educationalist, working in the education department she never really called herself a feminist in the Westerner sense of the word but she was for women's rights, she is a womanist. A womanist in the sense that she wanted to articulate and rely on the African moods of Independence that the women could claim and I think Efuru is a great example of that. (Chekhnaba & Mehdaoui, p1199)

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter has, therefore, carefully analyzed the complex dynamics of gender roles, identity, and self-empowerment within the structures of pre-colonial and colonial West Africa, with special reference to Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*. The analysis of the role of women in pre-colonial West African society highlighted their very important functions within family settings, while colonialism and the penetration of Christianity redefined such roles and introduced far-reaching changes in the social way of life. The female characters' depictions in Nwapa, particularly Efuru, become at once critical to the conventions of patriarchal values and illustrate women's resilience and their potential toward self-realization.

The novel effectively illustrates the dynamics between female and male characters, bringing to the fore the conflict between tradition and modernity. It reminds us how cultural practices and societal expectations press upon individual agency and collective identities. Efuru's journey to financial empowerment and self-identity is a complex tale of resistance against the structures of colonialism and patriarchy, and Nwapa elaborates on the crossroads at which gender roles and colonial legacies meet.

Besides, Efuru is an important example of African feminism and womanism, presenting one character representative of and in spite of cultural constraints while moving with ease through the shifting landscape of postcolonial West Africa. Nwapa challenges traditional gendered expectations and redefines female empowerment within a changing society. The chapter underlines the importance of self-awareness and self-realization in identity construction, thus providing a hopeful narrative of resilience and continuous reconstruction of gender and social atmospheres within postcolonial African literature.

Chapter Three:

Shattered Lives, Resilient Selves: Self-Awareness and Self-Realization in *Mornings in Jenin*

3.1 Introduction

The chapter is a critical analysis of the main protagonist, Amal. It traces the chronology of the central characters and events of her life up to her self-realization. This is done through the revelation of her pursuit of a lost identity and an insight into the painful nostalgic emotion felt while being displaced from her homeland. It analyzes how subaltern identity, nostalgia, and self-actualization have been represented by Susan Abulhawa through the post-colonial theory and orientalist approach, supported by psychological character analysis, in addition to Symbolic Representations of Female Strength and Resistance. This chapter reviews Abulhawa's portrayal of Palestinian identity struggles, the management of nostalgic feelings in terms of their homeland, and the path taken by the protagonist toward self-awareness. This will help in judging whether the author has fully captured, by way of illustration, the reconstruction of identity among Palestinians, their longing to return to the land of Palestine, and the journey of internal self-realization.

This chapter not only highlights displacement, cultural identity, and exilic psychology but also narrates the central character's development toward a greater understanding of the self. Among other things, the chapter discusses how literary representation reveals the complexity of the reality of subaltern experience, the ongoing relations with one's cultural roots amidst geopolitical war, and the transformative power of self-discovery in times of personal and cultural upheaval.

Historical facts and political truths relevant to the analysis are woven into the narrative to deepen an understanding of the character's experience. These factual features ground the literary analysis in real-world contexts, providing a much more complete framework for interpreting the themes of the novel and the characters' psychological journeys.

3.2 Palestinian Literary Evolution: From Early Poetry to Diasporic Political Fiction

Over time, Palestinian literature has shifted away from a poetic legacy towards hard-hitting political prose, seeking to detail and encapsulate the nuances of the Palestinian cause. For Palestinians, poetry has long been their official means of expression, functioning as a weapon of identification and defense alongside haters' patrimony. For many centuries, and with especially urgency following the epochal political turmoil of the twentieth century, there was a general turn towards prose to express political facts and national needs.

3.2.1 Poetic Heritage

Traditionally, poetry has held the status of the most elevated and meaningful form of art in Palestine. According to the social historian Dorothy Benson, poetry is an integral part of Arab culture and has been deeply rooted in the historical psyche of the region since the advent of Islam. This rich tradition of poetry has flowed through generations and has helped to shape the cultural and social context in which Palestinian culture finds expression. In the 1940s, poetry remained a very important part of public life and was regularly performed in both private and public settings. These events invariably attracted large and enthusiastically receptive audiences, testifying to the enduring popularity and relevance of poetry as a mode of cultural expression and communal identity in Palestine.

During the past hundred years, a reflection of all the dramatic changes in political upheavals, cultural transformation, and historical traumas has been going through the Palestinian experience via the development of Palestinian literature. Traditionally marked by poetry strongly interwoven with Arab literary traditions, Palestinian literature at first expressed themes of identity, land, and collective memory through its lyrical expressions. With the rise of colonialism, however, the Nakba of 1948, and the continued occupation of Palestine, literature did come to develop into an increasingly important medium of political articulation and resistance.

Poetry, both in its written form and in its public performance, constituted an important medium for nationalist ideas at crucial junctures in the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination. The political poets fully utilized this medium in stimulating and unifying their people during crucial crises- the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt and the 1948 Nakba being just two prominent examples. Poetry is, indeed, a strong medium for political expression and cultural resilience vis-à-vis colonial and displacement challenges. These poets, through the expressiveness and accessibility of poetry, have given a voice to the cumulative hopes, hurts, and defiance of the Palestinian people.

Literature has been used as a political weapon in many decolonial movements of the Global South in the twentieth century, for it holds immense power through times of occupation and oppression. Ghassan Kanafani, member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and a

Palestinian writer, once said in 1968, "The cultural form of resistance is no less valuable than armed resistance itself." Writing and creative expression are a form of resistance that allows the marginalized to stand up against dominant political powers. It gives an opportunity for people living under oppression to build their versions of history and culture. Tasneem Zyada, a British-Palestinian author, emphasizes that literature is peculiarly able to capture "the feeling and energy of the time," a characteristic that eventually propels historical change.

Al Nakba of 1948, where upwards of 750,000 Palestinians were brutally displaced from their homesteads and ancestral lands, finally compelled the resistance poetry movement of the Palestinian age. Intertwined together with the people's desire to be identified with them in search of identity justice and the right to return, this movement represented a resistance against occupation and exile. Among them were such prominent figures as Mahmoud Darwish, Fadwa Tuqan, Tawfiq Zayyad, Harun Hashim Rasheed, and Samih al-Qasim, gaining primacy as the leading representative of the pain, tenacity, and hopes of the Palestinian people. Their poetry is now turned to action, thus overcoming literature to become almost a reservoir of national memory. These authors used powerful imagery, cultural symbols, and heart-wrenching stories in the fight against erasure and to keep the Palestinian cause alive in the collective consciousness, both in Palestine and globally. It was a movement of individual suffering in dispossession and a communitarian hope and unity that placed poetry at the forefront of Palestinian resistance.

One of the most noted personalities was Ibrahim Tuqan, a Palestinian nationalist poet. Tuqan separated ways with traditional themes adopted in Palestinian poetry and instead focused more on social and political issues as a whole, more regarding the sufferings of the Arabs under British colonialism. A turn in Palestinian literature needed to open up indeed ways for other writers also to discuss social and political issues of their time. (Mir,2013)

Oppression, exile, and the search for lost history are the principal concerns of Resistance Poetry, and they find their articulation in the works of contemporary Palestinian writers who wrote about life under occupation and the psychological toll of not having a homeland. They detail through their stories how Zionist forces continue to ill-treat Palestinians, how some Arab countries fail to protect their rights, and how hard they find holding onto national identity. The younger generation of authors sets their work beside the stories of people who have been victimized; however, strong and resistant to any form of erased history is what this story is about.

These poets were instrumental in capturing the severe hardships faced by the Palestinian people, including the forcible deportation from their homes by the newly constituted Israeli military and the ongoing experiences of public humiliation and violence. This was a very significant form of resistance through the act of literary documenting. By including descriptions of such atrocities in their poems, Palestinian artists resisted the efforts of the Israeli state to mask these injustices and silence Palestinian narratives. For instance, Harun Hashim Rasheed's *Raise Your Arms* clearly captures his personal experience with Israeli militants, where the fear of being at gunpoint and being pressured is felt. These poets captured actual experiences of their community and then showed how they can rise against being forgotten.

Raise your arms…

they aimed their guns at me…

Raise your arms…

I stood, my eyes flaming

and scorching with anger

The world blackened in my eyes

Later, Palestinian writers, inspired by that original "Resistant Poetry," went on to produce material that fit well into the definition of resistance literature. Fadwa Tuqan enjoyed a marked transition in perspective following her encounter with Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, most specifically regarding the event of 1967. However, the works of Palestinian diaspora writers such as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Ghassan Kanafani, and Fawaz Turki developed and qualified the resistance poets. These writers contributed immensely to the culture and identity of Palestinians while adding a new dimension to the resistance narrative. If one wants to contextualize these works within a wider historical and political landscape, then Palestinian literature can be contextualized by tracing how the literary movements influenced these works.

These resistance poets voiced the despair and suffering of the Palestinian people but, at the same time, their strong hope and dreams of a free Palestine. Their works reflected just how strong and determined their community is and its resolute resilience in spirit. Grief and hope are very strong in Fadwa Tuqan's famous poem, *The Deluge and The Tree*. She shows strong will and hope,

cementing the Palestinian struggle in the last stanza, presenting a vision of renewal and freedom notwithstanding challenges:

> When the Tree rises up, the branches
>
> shall flourish green and fresh in the sun
>
> the laughter of the tree shall leaf
>
> beneath the sun
>
> and birds shall return
>
> Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.
>
> The birds shall return.

Tuqan believed in the return of these "birds," standing for the exiled Palestinians, and this belief really illustrates the deep hope that many Palestinians hold onto: a dream of one day going back to their homeland. This metaphor shows a strong desire not only to return to one's homeland physically but also a deeper need to regain dignity, identity, and a link to ancestral lands. Tuqan uses metaphors to tell a story of her sadness that soars beyond herself into a shared strength and eternal hope for freedom. Her poetry has been the cultural symbol, even inspiration, for the displaced.

Critical consensus among literary critics holds that Ibrahim Tuqan was the most important patriotic Palestinian poet of his generation. Tuqan is spontaneous and clear in his articulation, using simple language to show a patriotic zeal common to the period in which he lived; however, his work is peculiarly unique. According to Jayyusi, Tuqan is the only poet of his period who produced work that radically affected the aesthetic development of Palestinian verse. Blending humor with sarcasm, mixing patriotic and personal themes, Tuqan imbues his poetry with a distinctive appeal and accessibility seldom matched by few other poets of his time. According to Jayyusi, Tuqan's aesthetic achievement is charged with his acute intellectual and national awareness. Tuqan condemns British and Zionists but also expresses disappointment in the quisling Palestinian and Arab leadership of his day. In the poem *My Country*, one finds the enthusiastic expression of disillusionment where the speaker of the poem blames the leadership: they are "a band who shamefully survive and lead an easy splendid life." In the poem, Tuqan scolds them for the

ignorance of their lives spent in misleadingly showing themselves to the people as "saviors" and "protectors" of the nation.

From the middle of the 20th century until today, writing by Palestinians has been increasingly political. Writers use all forms of creative expression in their struggle against forced displacement and oppression. Palestinian writing was fundamentally different after 1948, when Israel became a state. Indeed, authors started creating new styles to cope with the enormous political, social, and demographic changes within their homeland. One of the earliest and most powerful reactions was a form of writing now called "Resistance Poetry," which came into being with the violent uprooting of Palestinians from their homeland. Included among these were poets such as Samih al-Qasim and Mahmoud Darwish, who, in their ways, were important to the movement. They deviated from traditional Arabic poetic styles to create a modernist, powerful style that spoke in outrage against colonialism and the Zionist rule. Through their work, they tried to save the Palestinian past to avoid the erasure of their culture and to make it more acceptable to the world. This "Poetry of Resistance" was, and is still, a symbol of Palestinian identity and a very strong resistance methodology, giving voice to a people silenced or displaced.

Although Palestine has long occupied a special place in the imaginations of Arab Muslims and Christians, Al-Quds never developed as a key literary center in the first decades of the 20th century, unlike Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, or Beirut. Under the British Mandate, patriotic writing flowered. Local magazines and newspapers, often politicized in tone, played a significant role in voicing Palestinian grievances related to issues on the Mandate administration, Jewish immigration, problems of labor, as well as land deals. Evidence of the role that literature played in early Palestinian history can be seen in Naser El Din al-Asad's 1957 work titled *Survey of the Modern Literary Trends in Palestine and Jordan*, which states that during the late 19th century into the late 1950s, the topics focused on by literature within Palestine were primarily love poetry, historical and religious essays, educational textbooks, and translations.

Indeed, Palestinian writers and intellectuals dealing with active translation projects, just like their Arab contemporaries, translated a great deal of works from such languages as English, French, and Russian into Arabic. This was important to encourage East-West literary flow, especially in the popularization of the novel, the short story, and literary criticism, not to talk about modernist poetry from T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. It so happened that this generation played an

instrumental role in launching many of the literary magazines, acting as a forum for new writers to come into view and also in creating broader public interest in literature.

As Palestinian writers began to grapple with displacement, exile, and self-determination, there was a shift from poetry to political prose, an urgency seemingly to document and speak about one's experiences under occupation. This shift was a watershed in Palestinian letters, as prose, in particular through the novel and the short story, emerged to take centre stage in addressing the series of oppressions, resistances, and complex social and political problems besetting the Palestinians. Through such evolution, Palestinian literature has not only preserved its rich cultural heritage but emerged to become an important contributor to the global conversation on justice, identity, and resilience.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Palestine's writers were influenced by its unique political and cultural circumstances, which changed the style and themes of their works. Although Al-Quds is considered one of the major religious hotspots in the Middle East, it was not exactly the most beaming literary hub as compared to other cities like Beirut, Cairo, and Damascus in the early 20th century. Compared to other Arab cities, also did not Al-Quds has access to well-known political or aristocratic individuals who might have influenced the development of literature and the arts. As a result of this, Palestinian writers were not able to establish a distinctive tradition of literary prose that might have asserted itself within the broader Arab literary landscape.

3.2.2 The Rise of Prosaic Expressions

Until 1948, Palestinian fiction, like all Arab literature, was slow to take up the novel as a form then almost new in Arabic letters. Khalil Baydas is credited with the first Palestinian novel written in 1920, which was titled *Al-Warith*. The work tells the tale of the romance of a Jewish girl and a Syrian orphan. It does not contain a strong political message, though it makes some indirect references to the growing conflict between the European Jewish settlers in Palestine and the resident Arab population. It was only after the departure of Palestinians in 1948 that political fiction as a leading preoccupation came to the fore from Palestinian authors. Modern Arab novels came into prominence during the 1950s and the 1960s. It was then that Palestinian novelists, most of whom wrote from the diaspora after 1948, emerged. These authors gave their works political conscience, taking from their uprooting and struggling in life to write modern works tied to the reality that they had lived. (Jayyusi, 1992.)

In the realm of fiction, Palestinian writers of no specific forms of short stories or novels unique to them were produced within the first half of the twentieth century. As has been the case with the entire Arab world, the functional development of fictional literature in Palestine has been characterized by experimental struggles. Jayyusi has noted that although Arabic literature had rich narrative traditions, both the oral and the written forms played a limited role in the early development of modern Arabic fiction, and Palestinian and Arab fiction writers looked to the contemporary Western model for inspiration. The explosion of translations of European fiction into Arabic, coupled with a modest output of original works and early debate concerning the nature of quality writing, testifies to this in no uncertain terms. Khalil Ibrahim Baydas, considered by many to be the founder of Palestinian fiction, called fiction the "greatest foundation of civilization," as it shapes societal mores and values by reflecting life with its values. Ahmad Shakir al-Karmi drew attention to the presence of moral lessons in works of fiction and their probable benefit to society and the Arabic language. (Ahmad Abu-Matar.p,28)

Al-Warith (The Heir), authored by Khalil Baydas, is acknowledged as the first Palestinian novel, released in 1920. The novel takes place in Syria and delves into the connection between Astaire, a young Jewish actress and singer, and Aziz, a Syrian orphan whom his uncle brought up as the heir he always wanted. The novel tries to explore the complicated and destructive love between the two characters, but it does not really go beyond the typical Arab views on Jews during that period. A Chicken's Memoir (1943) by Ishaq Musa al-Husaini is another important novel from this period. This piece tells a story about the sociopolitical conflict between Palestinians and Jews, but it feels more like a lesson and is somewhat idealistic, missing a deeper political awareness. The early fictional works by Palestinian writers were mostly experimental, fun, and insignificant in terms of artistic quality and attracting readers. The main emphasis on social messaging frequently eclipsed political awareness, which is a notable feature of the literary works from this period. Jayyusi points out that the way people viewed political struggle was quite idealistic, reflecting values like courage, self-sacrifice, heroism, resistance, endurance, and redemption. (Jayyusi.p,14)

Jayyusi (1992), a well-known scholar who studies Palestinian literary history, talks about how Ghassan Kanafani helped shape modern Palestinian literature in the 1960s. Kanafani, who lived in Lebanon and was an activist, became one of the important Palestinian writers who showed

the unfair actions of Zionist forces. In her study, Jayyusi says that Kanafani's books, especially his 1962 novel *Men in the Sun*, show the Palestinian experience of being forced to leave their homes and live somewhere else. The story is about three Palestinian men dealing with the difficulties of living away from home after the Nakba. These men live in a refugee camp in Lebanon and try to find work in Kuwait, but they face more mistreatment from Israeli forces, which shows the tough life many Palestinians have after Israel was created. When the men plan to go to Kuwait, they hire a driver who keeps them hidden in a water tank for the trip. However, when they reach Kuwait, the driver discovers that the extreme heat has caused the three men to die. This sad and strange story shows how Kanafani describes the suffering, sadness, and lack of hope faced by Palestinian refugees, something he knows well, as he was a refugee himself.

With the development of modern Arabic literature, Palestine-related writings started to be taken seriously. More Palestinians started to write novels aside from their regular political writings. Emile Habiby was a well-known Palestinian political writer and a former leader of the Palestinian Communist Party. In the late 1960s, Habiby, according to Jayyusi, was considered one of the significant fiction writers in the Arabic literary horizon. After political life, Habiby moved into writing short stories, and in the 1970s, he published his first novel, entitled *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*. This novel narrates the story of Saeed, a Palestinian who begins his life as an informer of the Israeli state in occupied Palestine. Being unhappy with life in Zionist-ruled Palestine, Saeed ultimately decides to join the Palestinian Resistance. The satirical tale pinpoints unfair acts that Habiby committed by the Israeli forces and also deals with themes such as betrayal, complicity, and resistance.

Palestinian modern literature came to the fore in the 20th century, reflecting a shift from the traditional Arab styles of letters to newer ways and manners of expression. With the beginning of the Zionist movement in Palestine, writers from Palestine started to focus their attention more on social and political issues. Many Palestinian writers in exile have passed through very harsh situations regarding not having a state, losing their homes, and suffering from violation of rights ever since the Nakba of 1948. Whether being refugees in other countries or living as second-class citizens under Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza, writers focus on political narratives related to what they go through in real life. The literature of the Palestinians is a window through which one can look at aspects of identity, displacement, and the struggle for justice.

The political struggle continued during the 20th and 21st centuries, and this tradition of resistance through literature began to include fiction and short stories as well as poetry. More and more modern Palestinian novelists have started to use these forms to address the injustice and troubles their people are continuously facing. They thus show a continuation of the tradition of using literature as a method of fighting.

The emergence of Palestinian writers throughout the 1950s and 1960s, who addressed identity, human relations, and the construction of gender, signaled a cultural turn in Palestinian letters. Such notable writers as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Samira Azzam, and Ghassan Kanafani contributed heavily to the dimensions and textures with which these themes were addressed. It is also very important to note that there were writers of the Diaspora present in the field as well. Azzam was in Lebanon, Kanafani was based in Kuwait and then in Lebanon, and Jabra found himself placed in Iraq. The geographical locations that these writers traced their origins to provide another form of understanding for their work; these pieces of literature not only spoke about the heterogeneous ways in which the Palestinians had to survive but also the unimaginably difficult circumstances that they had to endure at the hands of others on their land and elsewhere. Though the works of Kanafani and Jabra - especially those of the Diaspora - are more known to the English reader, a word needs to be said also about the no less important works of Samira Azzam.

3.3 Women Literary and Political Interventions

Women are seen in recent Palestinian literature as "revolutionary comrades," a mirror for their growing presence in life and the emergence of women's political and national awareness (Olwan, 2018, p. 66). Olwan, S. (2018). The shift really began, however, with the period of Intifada and the massive rise in this period of women's actual involvement in political and national mobilization, which seriously undermined the permanency of these stereotypes regarding females' roles in life (Farsoun, 2004, p. 47). The model of feminism established by women in Palestinian society coexists and is compatible with the Palestinian nationalist project, and as such, demonstrates the ability for their gender identities to exist with other forms of subjectivity, including national ideologies. Makkawi and Jaramillo (2005) cite the Intifada as a milestone in Palestinian women's writing, which engendered an important literature that focused on two prime struggles: occupation and societal oppression

Samira Azzam's stories are focused on complex aspects of Palestinian identity, interpersonal interaction, and gender relations, thereby providing an incisive view into the woman's life within the cultural and social context of Palestine. Azzam addresses themes of self-discovery, resilience, and cultural norms in her work, through which the reader identifies and enhances an understanding of the complexities related to womanhood within Palestinian culture. Azzam herself is rather authentic and emotionally nuanced in her real, at times disastrous, representation of personal crises and social pressures that beset Palestinian women. In her considerations of gender constructs, one questions convention and calls the reader to notice the evolution in both role and relational dynamics within Palestinian society. Her work weaves through identity and empowerment, transcending mere storytelling to deep insight into humanity and self-discovery.

The early feminine voice of Azzam forms part of the significant literature in Palestinian history, which expresses deep thought and reflection on culture. Her stories say much about the personal experiences of the individuals but, at the same time, reflect a collective consciousness about the historical, social, and political challenges that the society undergoes. Azzam uses storytelling to connect personal experiences with political themes and merges her concepts of identity and human relationships within the larger perspective of Palestinian cultural heritage.

By comparing, the writings of Samira Azzam, 1924-1967, one of the first women members of the Young Woman's Association for the Development of Literature, have yet to be accorded their proper pioneering place in fiction. Although she published three collections during her lifetime, two further collections were published posthumously. T*he Long Shadow* (1956) is a monumental work of Azzam, representing human relationships and characters through the backdrop of realism. The collection talks about the socio-economic problems of people predominantly, but it does represent general human relationships, though the propensity for a political connotation in some stories is not absent. Besides, some of the stories in the collection throw light on gender relationships. The story *The Long Shadow* talks about the pursuit of a sixty-year-old woman in search of a fellow traveler who would accompany her into the realms of the beautiful, the brilliant, and the wonderful of art. The story is done in interior monologue form as an unnamed female narrator reflects on the tension between societal perceptions of women versus

the self-perception of the narrator. The narrator wants to strive for higher intellectual effort while she is in a state of sorrow because of the traditional gender expectations and social roles.

While Samira Azzam's placing of a strong emphasis on gender, identity, and the experience of displacement played an important role in paving a way for Palestinian women's voices in literature in the mid-20th century, other diaspora writers built upon her ideas and took the Palestinian stories to a wider audience. Susan Abulhawa, like many of the modern and contemporary artists, continues this work of addressing exile and resistance with inclusions of Palestinian history intertwined with inspiration from other cultures. Similar to Azzam, Abulhawa draws heavily from the collective Palestinian experience in her work but broadens this legacy by incorporating it with Western literary techniques and appealing to a larger readership abroad.

Indeed, with such a diverse framework of the literary legacy of Palestine as part of the whole greater Arab tradition, the close examination of those literary and intellectual movements at work through the twentieth century has helped to shape present modern Arabic literature. This is true, especially about the influences on the Arab world through interaction with the West in this critical century.

Susan Abulhawa, one of the most prominent Palestinian women activist and writer, her parents were originally from At-Tur, a neighborhood sitting on the Mount of Olives, east of Al-Quds, but were displaced by war in 1967. Abulhawa was born when her parents were soon divorcing. Instability in her life at its this age confronted Abulhawa when her tender years of childhood confronted being relocated from Kuwait, the United States, and Jordan to Palestine. Her stay between Jordan and Kuwait moved between different sets of relatives affected her life. Between 10 and 13, Abulhawa had her time spent at the Orphanage, Dar al-Tifl al-Arabi, Al Quds.

When Abulhawa turned 13, she came to the United States, where, for a brief time, she lived with her father before entering foster care. Abulhawa followed with a Bachelor's in Biology at Pfeiffer University in North Carolina with a Master's degree in Neuroscience at the School of Medicine at the University of South Carolina. This brought her medical science profession under development, which commenced immediately after she finally concluded her training in schools. Before making up her mind to operate full-time as a novelist.

The fiction of Abulhawa, both political and romantic, is in English, yet her attachment to the land and the language of origin remains very strong. Arabic was her mother tongue, and she learned to read and write. She started her writing with essays and political commentaries. She was published in major newspapers and magazines like the New York Daily News, Chicago Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer and several international publications. She contributed to two anthologies: Shattered Illusions, Amal Press, 2002 and Searching Jenin, Cune Press, 2003

Abulhawa's first novel was *The Star of David* (2006), re-issued as *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), a multigenerational family story. This novel explores the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians, became an international bestseller, and has been translated into 32 languages. Her second novel, *The Blue Between Sky and Water (*2015), concerns family, love, and loss in Gaza, receiving much global attention and great critical acclaim. Her third novel, *Against the Loveless World (*2020) , A novel that navigates the intricacies of identity, resistance, and survival within the framework of the Palestinian experience. The story centers on Nahr, a Palestinian woman, who narrates her dramatically affecting life journey of trauma, exile, and pursuit of justice.

In addition to these novels, Abulhawa published a collection of poetry called *My Voice Sought the Wind* (2013). In her interview with the BBC she asserts:

> The Palestinian novel, like all our cultural productions, forms a terrain where our fragmented, exiled, occupied, and terrorized society gets to meet its various parts. The stories we commit to paper allow us to bridge the geographic, linguistic, political, economic, and generational borders that arose from our diaspora. It allows us to find each other in our collective trauma, our shared longing for home, and the deeply beautiful culture passed down to us from our foremothers and forefather.

Susan Abulhawa speaks to the importance of the Palestinian novel as something more than just storytelling, but also the means by which a scattered and traumatized people. What she is referring to is literature, a space in which Palestinians can come together across the fault lines of exile and occupation and share their longing for home and culture and stories that have been passed down through the generations. Writing, for her, is a means to heal and a form of silent resistance.

3.4 Susan Abulhawa: Writing to Assert Palestinian Identity and Resilience

The Palestinian people are an ancient, historic community with clear historical evidence of continuous residence in a specific territory for thousands of years. This society's cultural and moral fiber has been naturally woven and shaped through centuries by forces such as conquests, battles, migrations, pilgrimages, religious conversions, intermarriage, oppression, and triumph. Nevertheless, this historical and cultural identity is increasingly being erased or replaced with a simple narrative that negates the existence of the Palestinian people, as if history over the last few thousand years counted for nothing. In Western discourses, Palestinians are often represented as an invented identity with utterances like "Palestinians are an invention" or "Palestinians do not exist."

Like any other form of art, the Palestinian novel has come to play a unifying force in the lives of an already fragmented, exiled, occupied, and terrorized society. It is a platform on which Palestinians can look beyond their differences: places of residence, language, political affiliations, financial statuses, or generation. It is through shared trauma, a strong desire to return home, and deep connections to the culture passed down from generation to generation that bring these stories together.

However, deeper, the book affirms the reality of Palestinians by giving them a way of holding on to their identity in the face of other forces that would remove that presence. It is the means of fighting back and being strong, and it keeps memories alive and traditions intact. In these books, the stories are told with respect for the people, their honesty, and the rightness of what they do. It is because of this loyalty that these stories can be a testimony to the Palestinian people, their ancestors, their future generations, and all those who would want to know more about part of their complicated, sensitive, deeply human lives. These works do not pander or seek approval from individuals who do not recognize Palestinians as Indigenous; they show the raw, naked truths of personal and collective struggle and stand up for feminist defiance and universal honour in the face of oppression.

3.4.1 Appropriating English as a Sense of Resistance

Over several years, Israel consistently promotes its perceptions of the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in Western media. Thus, emphasizing the need to present the key Palestine history, one should note that this history was distorted enormously by the international media, which originated mostly in the USA. Literature is a serious instrument for narrating

Palestinian history. Probably the main reason behind the Palestinian art of writing is to express one's voice in that independent conversation, hitherto led mainly by Israeli leaders, about the narrations of catastrophe. Indeed, the object of nations is being produced through the discourses.

Therefore, in its function to counter imperializing narratives, the novel becomes a silent weapon for those who do not have the capability in military power to wield a sword, like in the case of Palestinians against Israel. Palestinian authors engage in the construction of the counter-discourse, and they do what Edward Said identified as 'speaking back' or 'writing back'. Thus, in Cleary's view, 'one of the enduring tasks of the Palestinian story […] is to resist the Palestinian narrative's marginalization and to write the Palestinians into history' (p.193). Because most of the Israeli authors have depicted Palestine and Palestinians in devious and stereotypical manner, the role of the Palestinian writer is to show the real picture, the truth. This can be attributed to their writing to draw focus on the Palestinian side, which needs a space of shelter; their territories are occupied by Israelis who commit atrocities against them. Philp Metres writes:

> Since Palestinian literature has emerged in the context of living through, and in the aftermath of suffering, exile and occupation, one of its cultural projects has been to speak and write in an attempt to address and hence chronic, or narrate for the first time, the repressed or laid realities of Palestinian existence ('Vexing Resistance (p.87).

Arabic has often been used to narrate the Palestinian story. This is probably one of the reasons for its restricted reading in Western societies. Since the audience issue plays a critical role, the use of the English language is believed to help in expanding the movement of the Palestinian novel in Western countries, hence educating these Westerners on the Palestinian issue. The use of a global language should be able to convey the burden of one's history and experiences to the global Community. In this context and her perception of her English novel, *Mornings in Jenin,* Susan Abulhawa feels that her account has helped reach people in Western societies. She declares:

> I think times are changing. There is a new generation of writers who have lived most of their lives in the West and we are telling our story, finally, in our own voice and in Western languages. It has been Israel's narrative that has dominated literature until recently, which was mostly propelled by Leon Uris' novel Exodus. It was natural that the first story be that of the conquerors, because they were mostly from Europe and spoke in the languages and nuances of western cultures. They also told the story that the West wanted to hear. It was

easier to hear a story of a land without a people. It was a romantic happy ending. The Palestinian narrative was in Arabic. It was unappealing, and it didn't reach the West in those early years. But our voice is coming of age in Western literature now and I think there is a real interest among readers to hear our story (qtd in Olivia Snaije, "The Many Lives and Languages").

During the Second Intifada, the Jenin camp was attacked by Israel's army; this prompted Susan Abulhawa to begin writing her first novel. Needless to say, having been one of the first foreign elements to be allowed entry into the camp after the Israelis sealed it off, Abulhawa got to witness much destruction and negative incidences being metered out to people. The competition was too overwhelming for her, and this particular event had a severe impact on her. She wanted to tell the stories of Palestinian people through fiction. She had been writing both in poetry and English and Arabic, but the catastrophe that befell Jenin made her wish to pen down her first book in English. This shift in her writing style enabled her to create a larger audience around the world and focus on the plight of Palestinians. Abulhawa wanted to speak for the divorcees of the conflict and to cause the viewers to doubt the main narratives surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In her novel, Susan Abulhawa deliberately chose chapter titles and subtitles in Arabic and English, a clear gesture to her double linguistic and cultural belonging. Whereas the whole novel was written in English, Abulhawa was aware that some Arabic words, basically culture-specific, had to be retained because they better conveyed the cultural and social realities she depicted in her narrative. She felt that some of the Arabic terms held their connotation and resonance meanings that English-language equivalents could not properly convey. For instance, she had employed El Naksa and El Nakba, pivotal terms in the collective Palestinian history, as well as El Ghurba, with its meaning of exile and dislocation. These words remind one of the historical and emotional burdens carried by Palestinians and, besides, demonstrate the insufficiency of translation to convey subtlety with respect to a particular cultural experience. Using these Arabic terms allowed Abulhawa to create a more genuine and deeply cultural narrative, where readers related even more to the Palestinian experience.

As an author and a humanitarian with a distinct purpose, Susan Abulhawa uses her work to reveal and share the realities of Israel's actions in Palestine to the global community. Her art serves a dual purpose, giving voice to the political oppression that Israel exerts on Palestine and

asserting her identity as an Arabic-speaking Palestinian woman in English. By adopting a foreign language, Abulhawa uniquely assumes the roles of both author and translator of her own cultural experience. This allows her to navigate between two linguistic realities and effectively represent Arab and Palestinian society.

It is thus noticeable that the use of Arabic language in her story improves the credibility and depth of her characters, adding life and free will to them. The pretensions to use colloquial terms like Jiddo, which means a grandfather, and thobe, referring to the traditional gown the men wore, give the characters a real and plural feel as they are grounded within the culture they belong to. This decision of language enables the characters she creates to have a better way of expressing their identity than to be bound by the limitations of translation. However, the incorporation of Arabic into the English text represents an anti-something more discussion. In the primarily English-speaking narrative, Arabic as the language itself refuses English domination and erasure of culture, fitting perfectly into the text and maintaining at the same time its individuality. Therefore, when it comes to Arabic, it is not merely a question of stylistics but of assertiveness of the Arab-American cultural self in confrontation with the imperialist other that projects its political potentiality in Abulhawa's work.

Mornings in Jenin can be considered a Palestinian social and cultural perspective. It defines the features that can represent a culture to another culture that does not understand the meaning of symbols used by the author. As a result, the use of the glossary becomes appropriate since it entails briefing non-Arabic-speaking audiences on the cultural aspects shown in the narrative. The glossary acts as a reference book that assists foreign readers in orienting them to cultural items peculiar to Palestinian culture.

Many Arabic terms and expressions appear in the course of the text; a list of them is given in the glossary at the end of the book. Such elements as the dabke are a traditional dance that is characteristic of some Middle Eastern countries, including Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. Another example is Kaak, also known as Kaak al-Quds, which is a specialty made from bread and is specific to Palestinian cuisine. Also, kaffiyeh and thobe, as some of the common words used also mean traditional gowns, which can be used to capture fashion tradition in the region. Other examples include 'inshallah,' which means 'if Allah wills it' and 'bismillah arrahman arrahim,' meaning 'in the name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate'; both of which show the impact of religion

in the Palestinian culture. These are items that are culturally dependent and part of the Palestinian and Arab cultures. Although there are English versions of the glossary of terms in the list of glossaries, people who do not know Arabic or Palestinian culture, perhaps, would not understand the essence of these words.

3.4.2 Using the Colonizer's Language to Tell a Palestinian Story

Said's discussion about stories and images in the construction of cultural and political subjectivities can be read truly in David's identity crisis and conflict. Whereas Said focuses on power relations in establishing the hegemonic discourses, it can also be seen that David struggles with multiple cultural messages and learning how to function within the collective society. This paper considers David's story, which represents a globalised postmodern self through the lens of uncertainty – ambiguity. Furthermore, the opposition to the purity of categories, what Said calls 'hybridity', is present in his work in relation to David, who navigates between two cultures to construct his identity. David's place in the ambiguous world that is structurally located between different cultures also mirrors Said's main argument about the representation of minorities; identity struggles are far from being binary and clear. Thus, Said's theories afford rich potential for describing and understanding David's story and, by and large, the role of the mechanisms of ambivalence, border crossing, and in-betweenness in the formation of both individual and collective belongingness

Originally published in 1979, *The Question of Palestine* by Edward Said was a major occasion among scholars. It does not matter which year, nowadays or in the future; it is as important and beneficial as when it was published. It is one of the very few books that could be called Histories of Palestine, and it is not only accessible to people who have never dealt with Middle Eastern history before but is actually quite fun to read for the average person living in the West. Critical viewpoint that is not always incorporated into the discourse becomes available. Although the treatise was released over forty years ago, the considerations mentioned in it are quite relevant and should not be taken lightly. In Said's works, one gets comprehensive research on the history that has brought about the present Palestine. These are the very failed Oslo Agreement, the impact of the U.S. intervention, the start of the second Intifada to seek independence of the Palestinian nation and, at last, the destruction of East Jerusalem, Gaza, and West Bank after a long span of military occupation. He also continues the discussion on the Palestinian National Authority

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and its collapse, as well as on the fact that the aggression against harmless Palestinians is still being continued.

In his way, Said sought to alter the focus of the problem of the Palestinians from the perspective of the Palestinians. He begins to discourse on where Zionism degenerated and how it became a part of European colonialism in the late 19th century. That is why there is a large migration of Jews to Palestine. Also, Said describes the overall historical context of the Palestinian people's uprising, which analyzes its main social and demographic characteristics. Thus, Said destabilizes the typical narratives and underlines the necessity to think about Palestine's history in the framework of the struggle and colonialism.

Actually, in the context of the chapter titled *The Issue of Representation,* Said writes the following: "The Arab had become a nonperson as much because the Zionist had himself become the only person in Palestine because the Arab's negative personality (Oriental, decadent, inferior) had intensified" (Said, 1992, p. 37). Said presents a critique of the Zionist's claim of the colonization of Palestine and the formation of the State of Israel based on the Zionist ideology that developed into a systematic political venture of the extermination of the Palestinian population. Indigenous people are either overlooked or depicted in the following casts: as savages, lazy, self-seeking or rebels. This colonial stereotype provided evidence of the fact that Jews needed to take over a land that was considered by Western colonial powers as a barren and scarcely populated country and remake it new, thus civilizing it. Said makes this important point by presenting lots of examples and dissecting them with precision in order to draw attention to the general picture (Said, 1992).

During the late 1800s through the early 1900s, England, in particular, was the most influential in the molding of Palestinian society because of their support of the Zionist plans. The Western stereotype of Palestine, or the 'land without people', was therefore flat wrong: over 600000 Palestinians were living there as a matter of legal right, who had been there for generations. It was mainly composed of an Arabic-speaking Sunni Islamic population together with Arabic-speaking Christians and Druze populations, underlining the socio-cultural complexity of this region. By decoding Said's analysis of the discourse on Palestinian society, one is presented with a historical perspective on colonialism that recognizes Palestinians' rights to their land and defines their displacement as a rightful means to 'develop' their territory. For instance, in past years, the

Zionist movement, which was affiliated with European colonial powers, vicariously denied that the indigenous Palestinian people inhabited the land selected for the establishment of a Jewish state. This denial stems from racism and colonialism that have been supported in different forms by European countries. Before they settled for Palestine as the place to establish a Jewish state, the Zionist movement considered many other places. They rejected other opportunities in Argentina, Cyprus, and South Africa. So, of course, the decision was not based on religion or spirituality, but it was based on the colonial mentality of that age. When Israel Zangwill uttered the words, "Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land", it was a way of saying that the Palestinians never existed and thus could be subjugated and colonized (Said, 1992, p.9). This phrase came to epitomize the colonial process in its entirety, which emplaced native folks either as inconsequential or as nonentities worthy of consideration when establishing a nation.

Edward Said has put it that the major disaster that is called Israel is indeed its Zionist ideology, which fails to acknowledge the fact that the Palestinians and the Israelis could accept each other's existence, according to Said, whose ideas were crafted by anti-Semitic persecution and holocaust among other aspects, this philosophy slowly enabled Israel to actualize the conquest of more territory in Palestine. On the other hand, the fact that Israel heavily relies on unfair, colonial and oppressive actions in order to maintain its power is a complete failure. A global trend around the world is that Jews are Indigenous people while Palestinians are immigrants. This concept has even permeated into the non-western regions and has altered the perception of the conflict.

They were said posits that PAs have always been faced with similar issues, mainly a result of Zionism, which is more than imperialism. Unlike other colonial ventures, Zionism was very successful; most European Governments and the ordinary people supported it. This amount of support was different from the norm in other colonial endeavours. Nevertheless, both the mighty Israeli political leadership and the influential American Jewish leadership, who have always endorsed all Israeli military and political undertakings, committed a big blunder. Palestinians were there in Palestine before the formation of the State of Israel existed. This is something that is normally overlooked or downplayed within the framework of dominating discourses. After the formation of the state of Israel, this population remains viable, proving its amazing capacity for

holding together despite many fatalities, like being displaced, and the erosion and obliteration of their culture and their material culture (Said, 1992).

Susan Abulhawa appreciates the impact of Said, pointing out that he "fought for the issue of Palestine with his brains, his principles and his passion that was able to mobilize numerous individuals, in numerous ways" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 327). She also equally embraces the fact that "Dr. Edward Said played a role in the making of this book [*Mornings in Jenin]* in a very big way" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 327). Abulhawa also examines the role of memory in the lives of refugees to emphasize that the struggle for recall might be the most effective way to counteract the process of erasure and displacement. In other words, Palestinians rely on memory to ensure the accuracy of the representation of their image and existence in the face of persistent efforts made by the other side to exclude them or redraw the borders of their existence. Such focus given to memory stresses its function individually and collectively as not only a personal act of resistance but as a cultural and political tool for survival.

Abulhawa's work narrates a tale that can be attributed not only to the Palestinian case but to all Palestinians in general. She gives this shared past a poetic resonance by putting the Palestinian struggle and all the shades of it into focus. In this way, she teaches the reader through her characters and, based on their experiences, how great this was by using multiple metaphors and images that are steeped in depth. Thus, she provides an in-depth account of the story of the Palestinian people by integrating both personal and general stories of displacement and resistance on a large scale. In fact, Abulhawa is a major figure in bringing the writing of the Palestinian people to people around the world who speak English.

Whereas Abulhawa's novel shares the Palestinian experience through depersonalized and collective human memory, Said's *Permission to Narrate* offers a critical theoretical framework and the narrative of imperialist power applied particularly to present the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and specifically to comment on the systematic exclusion of the Palestinian narrative from the control of Western media.

Edward Said's 1995 article, *Permission to Narrate*, was recognized as politics of representation and the power dynamics embedded in historical narratives as far as it relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It points toward Said's concern of earning Palestinians' approval for this type of narrative while paying respect to their voices regarding their concerns. Here, he sought

to tell the story of the Israeli war in Lebanon in 1982, culminating in the murders that characterized the Sabra and Shatila massacre. For Said, speech, or the 'permission to narrate', then carries with it great moral responsibility from an outsider's perspective. He goes further to say that even this power to comment on these narratives must be revisited; after all, the people in the margins can tell their own stories and tasks they don't need others to do for them. He said his critique also viewed the Western media, specifically what he referred to as the 'American media', which he singled out for its leading role in perpetuating the Zionist narrative. He shows how the American media, while reporting on the larger conflict and specific events like the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, promotes a narrative wherein the suffering of the Palestinians is ignored, and violence on behalf of the Israelis is minimized. Another observation made was that such press bias barred any change in the framing of the conflict and how its presentation would often silence the views of the Palestinian people. Said says this as a way of making his readers have the larger question of narrative, especially about the way the Western media collaborates with political and ideological influences to project the Zionist point of view. In this way, it encodes and frames events in a selective manner that literally excludes Palestinians from the historical narrative, justifying Israeli actions described by Said as colonial and racist discourses. The critique is a way of releasing the Palestinians from the dominant narrative about the Middle East conflict.

Susan Abulhawa employs specific literary devices such as multiple narrators, characters of different nationality origins, and more interrelated stories as a way of giving a detailed and rather multifaceted insight into the Palestinian genocide by the Zionist organizations. Among the sources, the one who can be mentioned is Robert Fisk, an English author and journalist, whose articles are critical of the US foreign policy in the Middle East and of the way the Israeli Government treats the Palestinians. Fisk really goes for the details and describes the massacre very vividly in the novel, and as during that time, the events and situations described easily animate the reader's imagination:

> They were everywhere, in the road, the laneways, in the back yards and broken rooms, beneath crumpled masonry and across the top of garbage tips. When we had seen a hundred bodies, we stopped counting. Down every alleyway, there were corpses—women, young men, babies and grandparents—lying together in lazy and terrible profusion where they had been knifed or machine-gunned to death [.... ..]murders; even dozens of bodies, killed

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in the heat of combat. But there were women lying in houses with their skirts torn up to their waists and their legs wide apart, children with their throats cut, rows of young men shot in the back after being lined up at an execution wall. There were babies [….] tossed into rubbish heaps alongside discarded US army ration tins, Israeli army equipment and empty bottles of whiskey (p.224-225).

While Zionist forces have inflicted much violence on the Palestinians, it cannot snuff out their history or obliterate their collective memory. In fact, the Palestinian narrative is resilient and will flow down successive generations. Displaced from their homeland, the Palestinians retain a vital link with their past and understand their positioning in the world through their particular praxis. It is this remembrance that is both a form of resistance and a mode of keeping alive their identity.

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3.5 The Historical and Psychological Context of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Novel

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest and most complicated struggles of the early twentieth century, which shaped present-day Middle East history. The two most prominent events within this conflict are those wars, which changed once and for all the political scenario in the region and the lives of millions of people: the ones of 1948 and 1967.

The inaugural large-scale conflict between the Arab and Israeli factions commenced in 1948, promptly after the proclamation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. The conflict, called the "War of Independence" by Israelis and the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe" by Palestinians, involved the newly formed Israeli forces fighting against an alliance of Arab governments, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. The Arab Rescue Force, together with several volunteers from diverse Muslim nations, provided help to the Arab soldiers. Over half of Palestine's indigenous population, estimated at 750,000, fled or lost their homes by 1948. This displacement, which many scholars have referred to as ethnic cleansing, resulted in the creation of a large Palestinian refugee population living in various Arab countries.

Nearly twenty years later, in what became famously known as the Six-Day War, the Arab-Israeli conflict again erupted into a conflict between the State of Israel and a coalition of Arab nations that involved Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. It began on June 5, 1967. In six days, Israel struck first with a series of preemptive attacks against its neighboring countries and emerged effortlessly

victorious. In 1967, after the war, Israel captured a number of strategic areas that included the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, which belonged to Egypt; the West Bank, including East of Al-Quads, and the Golan Heights from Syria. This conflict was the third full-scale battle between the Arabs and the Israelis and deepened their division and hostility. Again, it brought another wave of displacement, particularly for the Palestinians. The war forced many citizens to run away from their homes, not only in the newly occupied territories but also in places such as the areas situated near the Suez Canal in Egypt and the Quneitra governorate in Syria. The complete destruction of tens of Palestinian villages led to the internal displacement or refugee status of residents in neighboring countries. Furthermore, the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank began, which became the foundation of the still-ongoing struggle over these areas and the broader Palestinian territory.

Much of the historical background to the Arab-Israeli conflict provides the setting in most Palestinian novels, especially those that explore themes such as displacement, identity, resistance, and survival. The Arab-Israeli War is portrayed in most of these novels as a pivotal factor in shaping the Palestinian experience, influencing the lives of the characters, their challenges, and their sense of belonging. Personal and shared narratives also form a part of history that represents the massive political and social challenges in this conflict that Palestinians faced and have faced.

Palestinian novels mostly relate a character's struggle due to the aftermath of some historical events, personal traumas caused by exile, loss of community cohesion, or a struggle to hold onto their cultural identity under occupation. The novels serve not only as vehicles of people for expression but also as voices bearing witness to their communal past and the collective memory of Palestinians.

The historical context of the Arab-Israeli conflict in these novels is really complex, encompassing the political, social, and emotional aspects of the Palestinian struggle. This helps us see the larger historical influences that have formed Palestinian identity and resistance. *Mornings in Jenin* forms one such book that embodies all these ideas and, with the right balance, combines the accounts of individual and group levels to manifest the consequences of the long-term Palestinian experience. A historical backdrop of displacement, trauma, and resistance is greatly reflected in this book as the narrative is given through one Palestinian family while providing an emotive analysis of greater challenges facing the community.

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Mornings in Jenin starts with a prologue in Jenin in 2002. Herein, the author introduces her protagonist, Amal Abulhaja, struggling under the haunting pull of memory that relentlessly sweeps her returns to a homeland she has never really recognized or known.This moving opening further sets the reader in a position where she can realize that all the subsequent events of Abulhawa's novel issue stem from Amal's touching "petitions of memory," giving meaning to the difficult experiences of the first and second generations of Palestinian refugees.

The central characters in the novel never stop reminiscing about the horrors of the continuing violence in Palestine after the foreboding Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Indeed, quite often, they contrast the collective memory of the land of Palestine before and after the war, which tends to be very stark. The main character is forced to emigrate to the U. S.A due to the turmoil of the war but returns to Palestine when the fighting subsides for a while, only to be met with memories of the past, both joyous and bitter. The author criticizes the United States' strategies towards Palestinians, as they support Israel in its military attacks on other Arab states and Palestinians. In her book Suzan Abulhawa' s *Mornings in Jenin*, vividly describes the satisfaction and security Palestinians had enjoyed in their homes and lands before the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the war that followed," In a distant time, before history marched over the hills and shattered present and future, before wind grabbed the land at one corner and shook it of its name and character, before Amal was born, a small village east of Haifa lived quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine. (p. 3)

Just before the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Amal's family and ancestors lived in "a small village east of Haifa that lives quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine" (p.3). Each November, the harvest month brings back life to the community, and the sense of vivacity they feel within themselves depicts, more vibrantly, the happiness and satisfaction they enjoy in those days of their free will. Even women are involved with the men in the process of harvesting, and they can be seen deftly balancing baskets of olives, vessels, etc. on their heads while coming down the hills. To enhance the festive mood of harvest season, some men bend over against the soft breeze and gently blow through the mouthpiece of the nyes to feel the music coming out from the tiny holes under their fingers:

> Bassima hoisted a basket of olives onto her head, lifted in each hand a woven bag full of
> dishes and leftover food, and proceeded down the hill with other women who balanced

urns and belongings on their heads in plump uprightness (……) Yahya leaned into the breeze, blew gently into the mouthpiece of his fingertips. His grandfather caught him to play that ancient flute and its melodies (p.6).

In general, the homeland and farms for Palestinians were a haven that secured them a sense of security, peace of mind, and stability. The Israeli occupation in 1948 demolished the sense and feeling of homeland that had started to be built. The 1948 outbreak of war brought deep anxiety to the entire Palestinian nation. It further caused knots in their chests and hearts, leaving them feeling dizzy and weak, while their homes and lands were seized. The author borrows from the Nakba narrative, which is a historical event characterized by the mass movement of large numbers of Palestinians from their land. It is this grave injustice that gives more meaning and intensity to the call for immediate action on the need for Palestinians to return home.

There are two types of memory: autobiographical and traumatic memory, which are connected to the experiences of Palestinian immigrants following the conflict. Abulhawa's work portrays Amal, the protagonist, as being ensnared in a distressing recollection, an enduring specter that accompanies her to the United States. These constant memories haunt her with flashes of senseless killing, decaying bodies, and the injustice she experienced in Palestine. Most psychologists are of the opinion that traumatic and painful memories are not kept and stored in one's mind as a precise imitation of what had taken place; instead, they are reconstructive and changeable entities affected by the current situation and details of what had happened. But this might not be the case for Amal after her husband's death. In his book of theorist Daniel Schacter entitled *Searching for Memory*, where he argues that traumatized memory is "frequently more accurate than memory for ordinary events," he adds that recollections of vivid traumatic memory are, "characterized by intense and absorbing visual imagery" (p.205). Throughout the ongoing distressing occurrences and transformations, Amal is experiencing the most psychologically damaging and emotionally harmful components of her ongoing trauma.

It is Amal's decision to pursue higher education at Temple University in Philadelphia that turns out to be a real catalyst in the persistent recovery of her traumatic past. While she does manage to move into America with the intention of building a new life, free from the harrowing memories of her past, Amal cannot help but get entangled with the recurrent feel of her history, as she confesses, "The past was still with me" (p.174). This inability to forget the past is a reflection

of the deep impact of trauma on identity and cultural adjustment. For Amal, experiences in America relentlessly raise memories of her homeland testifying that her memories are too deep not to be suppressed. Amal's tendency to reflect on herself increases with a growth in her sensitivity towards such differences between herself and others in the new setting. This, therefore, implies that such a reflection constantly reinforces the cultural and experiential gap between her and American friends, putting her at odds with everyone around her. One of the more moving instances of this was when Amal remembered an overflowing sewer in the Jenin refugee camp. This not only brought out the contrast between her previous and current lives but also showed how these banal experiences in her new life could evoke such strong, atavistic memories of her origins. This continuous interplay in the past and the present in Amal's consciousness underlines the complexity of the immigrant experience and a strong reliance on one's cultural roots. It goes on to prove that adaptation to a new culture is not a linear process of letting go of the past but a giant balancing act between the different aspects that make up an identity:

> During the sewage incident that gave our college house its nickname, the commotion provoked memories of Jenin, where the open sewers sometimes overflowed and we would scramble, gathering old clothes and towels to plug the joints of our dwellings. Vile as the experience and subsequent cleanup were, Huda and I could not contain our excitement and anticipation at being allowed to sleep on the roof to escape the foulodor… We were naively full of dreams and hope then, blessedly unaware that we were the world's rubbish, left to tread in its own misery and excrement. (p.174)

Amal's consciousness is marked by flashbacks of horrific experiences she has witnessed in the Jenin refugee camp. After the 1967 war, Amal and her family were forcefully evacuated from their homes to dwell in tents in the camp as a symbol of their displacement and strong belief in the right of return. A background of trauma such as this influences Amal's mind in a manner that agrees with Kai Erikson's observations regarding how trauma affects the way people create and store their memories, he clarifies:

> Traumatized people often scan the surrounding world anxiously for signs of danger, breaking into explosive rages and reacting with a start to ordinary sights and sounds, but at the same time, all that nervous activity takes place against a numbed gray background of depression, feelings of helplessness … Above all, trauma involves a continual reliving of

some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances. (p.184)

The attempt of Amal to re-establish herself in the United States are continually disrupted by uncontrollable, distressing memory intrusions. These involuntary, intoxicating recollections obstruct her adjustment to the new environment and further impression the borderline that existed between her previous experiences and present circumstances. The constant interplay of traumatic memories is what defines the permanent nature of displacement regarding individual identity and the problems of cultural assimilation in light of deeply seated personal history.

In the later years of the existence of Amal in America, and notably after the Israeli troops kills her husband Majid, she shows a sharp withdrawal from life's pleasures and increasingly detaches herself from the environment. Amal relates Israel's assault on the Palestinian Liberty Organization in Beirut, undertaken under the garb of self-defense against the Palestinian raids. It is this narrative turn that speaks to Amal's growing attachment to her Palestinian identity and to the ongoing conflict as part of a personal tragedy that can only heighten one's investment in political and cultural struggles at a distance from home:

> Bombs and more bodies to receive them. I prayed and called the Red Cross… The results were 17,500 civilians killed, 40,000 wounded, 400,000 homeless, and 10,000 without shelter. Prostrate, Lebanon lay devastated and raped, with no infrastructure for food or water. Israel claimed it had been forced to invade for peace. (p.219)

The recreation of the war and its disastrous outcome elaborates on a deep sense of terror: living in fear, she connects her husband's fate to the general tragedy of numerous numbers of Palestinians, both inside and outside Palestine. She becomes so engrossed in war memories that it becomes very difficult for her to remember any other moment in her life, an all-too-common but very dangerous reaction to the complications of traumatic memory. Her visions are of bloodshed and bombardment, a reality so far removed from the normal human experience, stifling her aspirations and dreams. Amal's mind refuses to heal from the scars of war, which Amal carries. The continuous and strong effects of war continue haunting her until she can no longer navigate her surroundings, hence leading to psychological instability and a change in behavior, "I was a word drained of any meaning" (p178), "My life savored of ash and I lived with the perpetual silence of a song that has no voice" (p.245). The problem is that Amal does not make an effort to actively seek avenues

through which to restore her well-being, hence partially worsening the predicament in which she finds herself. She seems to be withdrawing from making an effort to try and overcome the trauma of her memories, and this further affects her attempt to create a relatively healthy environment in which to raise her daughter.

It is the information about her brother's children and his wife Fatima, having been brutally killed by the Israeli forces that forms the climax of trauma for Amal. That news, which was the height of all the traumatic experiences Amal went through, also maximized her emotional turbidity and problematized her relationship with her past and present identity. The depth of such loss, however, brings home the real and lasting effect of the conflict on the Palestinian diaspora, showing that events occurring very far away can fundamentally alter the psychological landscape and cultural allegiance of a person, even if physically removed from the immediate area of conflict

> They ripped my Fatima's belly with a knife! … They killed my babies!' His sobs shook the ground beneath my fear and I thought the force of his grief would tear the sun to pieces. He hurled objects within his reach … He cried with no measure of control, gripped in a seizure of pain… I imagined myself screaming at Philadelphians, who went about their daily American lives" (p.228)

As a result, this is an emotionally shattering experience that appears to have left Amal insensitive and distanced. Her inability to respond to her daughter's offers for affection, in an uncharacteristically less warm maternal manner, reveals the depth of Amal's close friend's distress. Notably, Amal does not reveal her troubled past or current plight to her acquaintances, or even show the slightest intention to resolve her trauma through her social network. The result of such emotional withdrawal and isolation epitomizes further the effect of compounded trauma on the very ability of a person to engage in relationships and to express emotions. It brings out the complex interplay between personal history, cultural identity, and psychological well-being in the context of displacement and ongoing conflict.

Amal's unpleasant memories have developed a high sense of doubt in her and also unresolved confusion, hence her inability to create and develop a well-outlined self-identity. This is because it allows the memory to affect and drastically play a role in an individual's perception of their identity. It is very superlative in determining the effects of her experiences from the past, which have forced her to develop a view of life from their influence. Amal's reconstruction of her

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past significantly impacts the situation she is in at present as well as her future prospects. Traumatic memories are very forceful in influencing self-formation, over which she is unable to have any control. Amal now faced challenges in asserting her cultural independence in this environment, which would only crucially underline at the same time the complexity of the relationship between trauma, memory, and the development of one's identity in the sense of being displaced and acclimating to a new culture.

Therefore, she is trapped within the boundaries of a deeply distressing past, where her recollections are completely controlled by the traumatic experiences she went through, ultimately influencing the course of Amal's problematic future. Amal's thoughts are continually interrupted by the haunting presence of Fatima and the essence of Palestine. They yearn for closure and meaningful recognition of the crimes they endured. Amidst these enduring hallucinations, recollections of Mama, Baba, and Yousef and an intense need for Majid's company come together, forming an overpowering load that heavily burdens her heart, similar to the oppressive heaviness of the concrete that cruelly took Majid's life in their residence. Amal powerfully expresses the overwhelming internal conflict that consumes her:

> The only way to stop the emotional storm from gathering was to splash cold water over me. Literally, I needed physical coldness to mute it all. Otherwise, I'd have gone mad, I'm sure of it. But the storm was always there, latent, lurking in the vast clench of my iron jaw. So I stopped reading or watching the news and I feared touching Sara, lest I infect her with my destiny. Lest she warm my heart and unthaw the wrath and the ghosts and madness I feared lived inside me. (p.231)

Her character is so sensitive that she refuses everyone's closeness, even her daughter, Sarah. Underneath the manifest fierce protectiveness, however, there is a deep love for her daughter, combined with the deepest fears for her own inner turmoil and the cruel world outside. Passing through life in a shroud of silence, Amal shuts herself up in a self-imposed jail in order to protect herself from the outside world. In such a situation, she gives in to fate and struggles for her rights so as to amend the past and break through the hurdles of the present and the future. By the very nature of willingly suppressing and silencing the traumatic memories, Amal unconsciously gets involved in spiritual and mental self-destruction. She has cut off her lifeline for the present or the future where she connects the gap between her past and her current reality, turning an agonizing

past into strength, she would understand her history better for strength and better make her way in the present with purpose and strength.

3.5.1 The Impact of Colonial Oppression on Identity and Family Structure

Mornings in Jenin is of paramount consideration for the Palestinian families since it highlights the timeless features of the land before the Israeli invasion. Susan Abulhawa explains the social mobility of Palestinians during colonial oppression through vertical and horizontal comparison of different family patterns in her novel. She primarily concerns the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, but she has given more weight to the imperial impact caused by the Israeli family over the Palestinian land. Abulhawa portrays the intense fight and unending resiliency of the Palestinian family amidst the oppression of the colonizer throughout and after several wars. Furthermore, the author juxtaposes the Palestinian family in their natural habitat with the Palestinian family living in the United States, outlining dramatic changes that come up as a result of armed conflicts and diaspora.

Abulhawa's novel represents Palestinian society before the catastrophe, or, as Abulhawa writes, "Before Palestine was Palestine,"(p.154) through the families of Yehya Abulhaja, Haj Salem, and Dalia. These three families are further grouped into a larger society-political structure, with the characteristic of being patriarchal, wielding command over major or subordinate society-politics, where the power play operates on the axis of gender, religion, and ethnicity. Traditionally, Palestinian gender norms are defined by the family unit. While men work in the fields, women work at home or in the fields. Family virtues are very much stressed in a traditional society, with the father being at the center of the family and his authority not questionable. Yehya and Haj Salem are, like most Palestinians, Arab and Muslim farmers. Islam and tradition are their codes of conduct, and social customs have been drawn from them.

Yahya's family became even bigger after his son Hassan married Dalia and Darwish married his cousin. It was the mothers' responsibility to find wives from their sons' relatives, and the selection of brides had been ordered by tradition since birth through arrangement (p.20). The family was big for Dalia. She had 12 sisters, and her father was a Bedouin patriarch, who, like all Palestinian fathers, was "the ruler of the family"(p.18). However, to the author, in her view, Palestinian society stereotyped Bedouins as travelers, barbarians, cruel, and heartless. (p.18). Abuhawa places all these families in a colonial geographical context. Subsequently, this marked

the period of the British Mandate and concurrently witnessed the arrival of Jewish settlers in Palestine, followed by a period of Jewish occupancy and widespread displacement of the indigenous population.

The troublemaking role that the Zionists play is foreshadowed by mentioning Yehya, who warns Hasan, "One cannot know when a cunning Zionist or some British person will do something that will delay everything" (p.14). Abulhawa takes on the task to portray the Israelis through the family of Ari in the novel. She also presents Moshe's family during the El Nakba time. Both families flee the massacre of the anti-Semitic Nazi regime, however Abulhawa depicts the former as friends and the latter as the colonization forces. A friendly friendship is born between the mothers of Ari and Hasan. The characters share gifts and food, amongst others with one another besides giving a helping hand. This is evidenced by Yehya's hindrance to his son Hasan's continuing education in the university and the interference of Ari's mother, Mrs. Pearlstein, who took the task of advising and counseling Hasan until his graduation in 1943. (p.17). On the other hand, Moshe is envious of the Arabs because they have children, unlike his wife. He wonders what possible reason God could have for refusing her the ordinary gift of parenthood when Arabs are otherwise blessed with a superfluity of healthy offspring. (p.35)

Abulhawa uses the characters of Moshe's family in the novel to represent the colonizer and Dalia's family to represent the colonized. In collaboration with the Zionists, Moshe thinks that they are God's chosen people and that they are especially preferred over the Arabs. The Jewish society believes that they are the chosen people because of their bloodline as children of Israel, and they see themselves as the children of Israel because God chose their forefathers. As Memmi asserts, the Jewish colonizers show no interest in the needs of the colonized population (p.69–70). Their main aim is to establish a state for the Israelis, and in this process, they hardly care about the will and political independence of the Palestinians. El-Nakba represents a shift in diplomatic power from the British to the Zionist colonial power. And after El Nakba, the Palestinians entered into a stage of displacement as a refugee living outside their homeland and a fragmented minority inside their colonized homeland.

In his book titled *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* Albert Memmi provides a comprehensive analysis of the victimization, exploitation, and ongoing denial of rights experienced by persons who have been colonized. The novel *Mornings in Jenin* depicts a profound

metamorphosis of life within the camp, wherein family members have a profound sense of despair and endure significant dissatisfaction, grief, and diminished self-worth. Man, therefore, suffers from original splitting in his mind and a fragmented sense of self. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frans Fanon, along with Sartre and Memmi, refers to the colonizer as the sole doer who makes history through power and the ownership of means. According to Memmi, there is a belief that settlers have a tendency to make the indigenous population less human and use terror and horror as tools of control (p.10). In Mornings in Jenin, terrorists' tactics and tyranny are used by the colonizers, culminating in violence in their bid to plunder and forcefully evacuate the local population. Susan Abdulhawa's Dalia character portrays that Yehya's extended family survives the Israeli brutality, evident on many occasions. Days before El-Nakba, a Jewish gang cuts Dalia's ankle band, and in the Nakba days, her infant is taken away by a soldier. The Israeli army tore the family apart by subjecting her son Yousef to suffering and killing her husband Hassan and father-in-law Yahya. The Israelis left Dalia without hope and doomed to a life of spiritual degradation. Moreover, the colonists often stole the villagers' most valuable possessions and forcibly expelled their families from their homes and lands, leaving them to fend for themselves in the miserable conditions that had kept them from Palestine due to previous catastrophes.

According to Albert Memmi, there are two possible reactions for colonized peoples: either they are transformed or they rebel. In the former case, the colonized accept colonialism and try to survive based on the situations already defined for them by the colonizers. As shown in the book of Abulhawa, the people of Ein Hoda are helpless "they have no arms against the heavy artillery of Israel. As such, they prepare a dinner, feed the soldiers, and show a real readiness to live in peaceful coexistence "(p.28-29). However, the Israeli government refuses the idea of the coexistence of Palestinians because the Israelis want to take full control.

Memmi goes further to state that the colonial will believe that the model of the colonial master is perfect, and so many dream of being like or at the same standard as this model, sometimes at the cost of their identity in assimilating into the ideals of the coloniser (p,120). The Palestinian characters in *Mornings in Jenin* do not see the Israelis as appropriate models, nor do they try to act like them. In addition, Abulhawa introduces a Palestinian family working jointly with Israel. The family of Huda, more so her father, gives Israel specific details about the people living there in a bid to form a relationship with Israel; these people are living as a family in Israel (p.70).

Fanon believed decolonization was a violent process in which the colonized people rose up and forcibly removed the settler from their land. He said, "Colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at the throat" (1961, p. 23) and "Colonialism is violence [.....] that only yields when confronted with greater violence.(p.61)" He believed that the peasants were more anti-colonial than the national leaders. He felt that peasants were more likely to rise up spontaneously because they are outside the caste system and have the least to lose. This is elaborated further in the novel, wherein most families acknowledge that "existence is resistance" and follow the "loud god speaker voice" in leaving their homes.

Abulhawa's story illustrates how the Palestinian characters have resorted to violence and revolt when all hope is lost in the United Nations and what it promised. Some characters, like Hasan, fight and die during the 1967 Six-Day War; some, like Yousef, join the revolutionary struggle. The same year, the PLO had reacted to its own assaults of the year 1967 with the battle of Karameh, during which the Fedayeen fighters fought well against the Israeli forces, amongst whom was Yousef.

On the other hand, the impact of colonization on the cultural life of the characters pales almost in comparison to that of exile. Amal endeavors to express the Palestinian culture in the United States in a complex way because there are invasions of religious and traditional limitations that conflict with the American ideal of freedom (p.154). Susan Abulhawa has used so many aspects of Palestinian customs, religion, taboos, superstitions, and stereotypes in her story that she has effectively brought out the contrast between Eastern and Western civilisations. She thus reflected the continuous community life of both the periods before and after the merging of Israel. Abulhawa provides an illusion towards the Arab practice of child circumcision using the character Jolanta, who gets to know about it when her husband Moshe brings the child Ismael, as an infant, to their home, for he took the initiative of having this unusual Arab practice done on his child (p.36). The author familiarizes readers with certain Arab customs when she uses various occasions and the routine her characters adopt within the refugee camp. Families from some cultural backgrounds prefer dining together and taking their food on a large plate instead of using utensils (p111). During funerals, coffee is not served with sugar to show respect for the deceased (p.108). The practices that are followed during weddings have not changed since the time of El Nakba. Dowry and bride preparations, segregation of women from men during such festivities, and

ritualistic delivery of lambs and presents—Abdulhawa compares these two weddings—that of Dalia and Amal, respectively—to drive home the point of the stability of the Palestinians in their culture (p.163).

The novel by Abulhawa incorporates various stereotypes, such as the belief that Arab males prioritize having a son rather than a daughter (p.148), and those Arab women engage in gossip, although not intended to harm, but rather reminding for their earlier years (p.156). Abulhawa has used various metaphors to show that Bedouins are wild travelers (p.19) and the wandering refugees are the filth that drifts hopelessly between desolation and hope (p.138). In addition, Abulhawa shows an unflinching willingness to break many an Arab taboo, particularly those regarding puberty, birth, marriage, sexuality, and other such topics. The author does not even spare the use of abusive language by Arabs in the streets, which she terms the 'foul lexicon' (p.146). She explains further that the Europeans claim these cuisines, like hummus and falafel, as traditional Jewish cuisine and that places such as Qatamon villas are indeed ancient Jewish dwelling places (p.205).

Mornings in Jenin portrays the dynamics of Palestinian familial connections as a multifaceted amalgamation of affection, admiration, compassion, and sincerity. The paternal figure is depicted as the focal point, custodian, and defender of the household, as seen by Hasan's commitment to safeguard his spouse and offspring subsequent to the Israelis' seizure of Dalia's possessions. When it comes to the pursuit of happiness for their respective families, both Palestinian and Jewish patriarchs employ distinct approaches. Hasan, for instance, presents his wife with a gift, whereas Moshe appropriates a kid from Dalia to bestow onto his own wife Jolanta, so transferring happiness from one family to another. Notwithstanding the anguish caused by displacement and deportation to the camp, the Palestinians find solace in familial affection, as exemplified by the unions of Fatima and Yousef, who defy conventional norms by entering into matrimony, and Amal, who perceives her marriage to Majid as a means of re-establishing the familial, domestic, and national bonds that were absent in the camp. The chapter elucidates the importance of familial connections and the divergent strategies employed by Palestinian and Jewish patriarchs in tending to their kin throughout the tumultuous period of the conflict.

In *Mornings in Jenin* is a deep analysis of complex social dynamics going on in America through its handling of cultural disparities, brought forth in the character Fatima, who makes very astute observations into present American society, as well as in the depiction of Angela's family.

This kind of story mode puts into scrutiny several sociological and cultural beliefs. Fatima's claim, "I believe that most Americans do not love as we do," offers a very good example of the cognitive difference between the "high-context" and "low-context" cultures theorized by anthropologist Edward T. Hall. Based on this theoretical approach, Fatima's perspective is that of a high-context culture characteristic of collectivist societies in an essential exploration of a low-context culture often associated with individualistic societies like the United States.

The portrait of Angela's family life is but a tiny microcosm of the larger trend described by sociologist Robert Putnam as "bowling alone": the decline of social capital and community in American life. Angela's husband is a classic example of what family sociologists call "family fragmentation": rampant womanizing and an occasional visit home. This phenomenon is often associated with highly individualistic societies. The contrast between Angela's "classy lifestyle" and the "dry relationship" she tended to maintain with her husband explains the concept of "conspicuous consumption" created by sociologist Thorstein Veblen. It implies that being materially rich is a visible front that conceals a poverty of relationships. This discriminates against the critical thought that the author tries to put forth between the superfluous things inside.

The narrative mode that Abulhawa uses, and, more specifically, the use of the outsider perspective through Amal and Fatima, assists in commenting on American social practices. This conforms to the sociological conceptualization of a "stranger" by Georg Simmel. Yet, the standpoint from an outside position, as embodied, offers readers an opportunity to question and re-examine elements of American culture that they assume to be "given." Through the juxtaposition of the deep emotional bonds experienced in collectivist societies with the apparent superficiality that defines individualistic civilizations, Abulhawa directly participates in broader academic discourse in the field of cross-cultural psychology over the nature of relationships and the expression of emotions in varied cultural contexts. This narrative approach tends to provoke readers to critically assess cultural assumptions over love, family, and social relations.

3.5.2 Diaspora and Identity

Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* is a much-needed contribution to Palestinian literature, bridging a serious gap in fiction writing within this very setting. The fact that Abulhawa was a Palestinian refugee herself during her childhood gave her presentation of the refugee condition genuineness and depth. Through personal experience and collective memory, the artist

succeeded in introducing the painful reality of the Palestinian refugees. The author's life mirrors that of her leading lady, Amal; both of them move to the United States for education and eventually settle there. Through the use of autobiographical elements in her story, Abulhawa helps to instantiate verisimilitude in the narrative, and this enables her to craft a story that has greatly resonated with the larger Palestinian diaspora. Abulhawa's text embodies a type of cultural ambassadorship that transfers, or effectively translates, Palestinian issues and ideas onto the world stage.

Abulhawa has combined deftly personal experiences and historical events into a story that does two things at once: entertain readers with a thrilling narrative while being a medium for culture preservation and identity exploration. She told her story, one of giving voice to the intricacies of Palestinian identity in exile, offering insight into the struggles faced in preserving cultural ties while adapting to foreign environments. This not only enriches the canon of Palestinian literature but also deepens our understanding of refugee experiences and the long-lasting effects of exile on personal and social identity. Abulhawa interlaces human storytelling with historical proof to sustain a multi-dimensional description of the Palestinian existence that goes beyond geographic and cultural borders in Mornings in Jenin.

There are two necessary conditions for identity to be considered a national identity. First, a social dimension of identity must exist, fostering a sense of individual and collective belonging to a specific place or homeland. Second, a political identity requires the presence of an objective and recognized entity, which is currently not present in the case of the Palestinians as a result of a variety of both exogenous (outsider) and endogenous factors. In his seminal work, The Iron Cage, Rashid Khalidi investigates diverse dimensions of Palestinian identity, including peace, negotiations, political recognition, and the perennial statelessness of the Palestinians, in 1997.He said:

Despite their vigorous sense of collective national identity, the Palestinians have never succeeded in creating an independent state of their own and have no sure prospect in the future of ever having a truly sovereign state, or of possessing a contiguous, clearly demarcated territory on which to establish it. Beyond this, for their entire modern history since 1917—they have suffered from a series of traumatic impositions (p.182)

Exile and diaspora, referring to the phenomenon of people having to leave their homeland and live in another country, characterize a large part of the construction of identity in the case of Palestinians. As a result, this factor manifests itself in what Palestinian Americans write today. This phenomenon is very evident in works like Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin. Given the lack of attention to new Palestinian American voices in literature, it merits closer scholarly scrutiny. Political hindrances facing Palestinians, particularly those in diaspora, inextricably link to the fluidity of Palestinian identity, marked by dates, covering, and resurgence. The phenomenon contributes critically to our understanding of the interplay of displacement and identity in exile literature.

The literature of exile by Abulhawa acts as an important prism through which one can explain and analyze the deep influence of displacement upon the development of Arab identity and its portrayal. Her documents incorporate experiences related to the ongoing process of building and saving identity in the Diaspora, not only for the Palestinian case. The literature of Palestinian Americans is useful in understanding how exiled groups negotiate their identities in relation to their ancestral homeland and the adoptive countries. It is meant to deal with the issues of loss, memory, cultural continuity, and belonging

It is this contradictory nature of exile, acting as an instrument both of oppression and arguably even self-assertion, where its influence on the construction of one's identity is first considered complex. This is in line with Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theory of the "third space," wherein individuals bargain for new cultural identities between the dominant and marginalized cultures.

The contrast between voluntary and forced exile comes in very strongly in juxtaposition of modern American expatriates with Abulhawa. It shows the different dynamics of control over the process of negotiating identity in the dissimilar circumstances of exile. Abulhawa and many who are exiled by force often exhibit a strong desire to maintain and declare their cultural identity. This is closely linked with their political resistance. Ultimately, how exile and identity play out in the case of Abulhawa illustrates the complex ways through which cultural articulation works under postcolonial conditions. The work of this writer does not only serve as a mode of literary expression but also as a mode of cultural resistance

It is with Edward Said's idea in mind that exiled writers lend dignity to a condition designed to deny it that one finds the critical framework for analyzing the role that Palestinian literature assumes in identity formation. In *Mornings in Jenin*, Susan Abulhawa provides a case in point for this idea by including a narrative that not only deconstructs dominant discourses but also highlights the multifaceted dimensions of Palestinian identity. Although it is very hard to ignore the influence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on Palestinian identity, Abulhawa, in line with historians like Rashid Khalidi, demonstrates that this identity has been variously fashioned out of nationalism, cultural continuity, and diaspora. The novel situates the formation of identity within larger historical processes, echoing the changes in Palestinian consciousness throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

In portraying characters who wittingly form and declare their identity, Abulhawa finds a point of contact with the ideas of Frantz Fanon regarding the role of agency in anti-colonial resistance. In addition, it is her transnational perspective that, as a diaspora writer, enables profoundness in the portrayal of the Palestinian identity as a construct transcending geographical boundaries while preserving the original cultural essence. Therefore, *Mornings in Jenin* adds nuance to the idea of Palestinian identity, showing its survival and adjusting abilities in the face of exile and conflict

The scant scholarly attention that new Palestinian American literature receives marks a huge gap in our understanding of contemporary Arab American identity formation. It is literature that is fledgling but particular to the shifting nature of Palestinian identity in the Diaspora; it weaves together the complex interplay between cultural history, political condition, and immigrant experience in the United States. As a result, a close examination of the literature is critical to gaining a detailed understanding of the intricate aspects of Palestinian identity in the 21st century. In any case, this type of close analysis becomes important against the larger framework of Arab American experiences and the continuing Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

3.6 Amal's Self-Discovery

Many Arab-American writers, both classic and modern, deal with the issues regarding their compulsions from their original lands and the chaotic aftermath of the significant disorders in their native countries. In this sense, the first generations of Arab-Americans deliberately tried to create a bridge between their original Arab culture and their American experiences, evidencing some kind

of reluctance to absorb into American society. A profound longing for their native cultural origins, the history that still shapes their current existence, the significant historical occurrences they have experienced, and their sense of home intensifies the feeling of not fitting in together. Their desires and ideas about how their identity and sense of self should be defined in the present and future strongly influence their creative creations, with nostalgia playing a significant role. The novel selected for this thesis represents the notion that some Arab-American writers from the new generation continue to draw inspiration from their past experiences and attempt to incorporate them into their current lives.

Nostalgia and identity have a lot to do when it comes to understanding the past and its effect on the present and the future. They share similarities in this respect. Better put, both can be changed at any time and place due to personal, collective, or external reasons. According to Victor Turner (1920–1983) , there is a constant and mutually influential relationship between the psychological processes of individuals and their actions, relationships, and outcomes. This interdependence is created through nostalgic memories of the past (quoted in Brown and Humphreys, p,154).

Susan Abulhawa's treatment of nostalgia and identity in *Mornings in Jenin* deviates subtly from other novels. Amal, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes a revitalized feeling of longing throughout her initial stay in the United States. The depicted four-year period is characterized as a period of cultural and spiritual confusion while also serving as a phase of academic development and increased consciousness and awareness. The story of Amal's first residency in America is very linked to the novel, it adds as essential evidence that relates to the general topic's characteristic of the novel. This part of the story can be precisely inserted into the larger picture of the novel, yet its imposed impact is expounding on nostalgia and treatment of identity politics.

Amal's first weeks in Philadelphia are characterized by her endeavors to explore the foreign setting and embark on the novel journey of constructing a cohesive new identity, evoking a multitude of nostalgic emotions for her previous home and family. She states:

> The scent of the city seeped into the car. Street vendor cheese-steak hoagies, greasy fries, diesel truck fumes, and car exhaust gave my nostrils a full-bodied welcome. It smelled like the irretrievable loss of white Madonna lilies growing in the limesinks of Palestine, the

bereavement of my   camphires, which would burst forth each spring into fragrant flames of white and yellow clusters, delicate and fiery. (p.170)

It is Amal who comes to realize that she indeed cannot adjust to the new host country without maintaining her own customs and culture within this diverse society. Therefore, in the first year, Amal is mostly affected by a feeling of nostalgic devotion towards the culture and religion of her past homeland. This is a feeling of pride and love for a culture that she feels but does not necessarily practice in her day-to-day activities. Amal has been terribly hit by the demise of her motherland, Palestine. This thereby causes in her a feeling of longing and nostalgia that cannot be pacified by the reality of the present. In fact, she is driven to her nostalgia for her old home by various stimuli that remind her of her past. The nostalgic behavior that Amal portrays in the first year exemplifies the fact that she has not been integrated into American culture. On the contrary, American culture is foreign and unwelcoming to her perception, as opposed to her great urge to belong, "I found no commonality with the men and women … I felt diminished, out of place, and eager to belong" (p.172)

The narrative compels the reader to observe Amal's compliance with the dominant cultural standards in America, leading to the imposition of a new identity on her as a member of an ethnic group that is ostracized. Amal's longing for social approval prevents her from questioning this imposed identity and compels her, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to display characteristics that strengthen this newly given persona. This phenomenon explains her repression of sentimental emotions and her purposeful disconnection from her past life. Political arguments were consciously avoided, correspondence with family members was stopped, and she preferred to be known as 'Amy', she states, "I deliberately avoided political discussions, didn't write to the people who loved me, and let myself be known as "Amy"' (p,178). The conformity of Amal to these norms works as a medium towards reframing and redefinition of her identity, thus assisting her to find a space within American culture.

Nostalgia and memory, while connected, are separate concepts. Memory serves as the medium via which nostalgic recollections are vividly portrayed. Amal experiences a persistent feeling of yearning for her forgotten past, as she comments, "But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me" (p.171). It is relevant to point out at this juncture that nostalgia is not

merely dwelling in the past. It is rather an interaction of positive memories juxtaposed with negative ones in their framing and influence on present and future experiences.

All efforts by Amal to overcome her overwhelming nostalgia with an artificial reconstruction of identity are in vain. One of the striking examples that explains the role of family in developing nostalgic feelings in an immigrant is when Amal recalls about each and every family member and relative. This example better explains the extremely deep impact of a family member on one's identity and belongingness, even across physical distances.

Thus, Amal's artificially remolded identity fails to prove that the deep-seated ties of culture and family are resilient. Her struggle speaks of the delicacy that is required in balancing two worlds: an adopted American culture with the Palestinian one she was born into. This inner struggle becomes a powerful example of how challenging it is for immigrants to reconcile the past with the present.

The case of Amal shows that, more generally, nostalgia, especially when family is involved, can be such a strong force that it will not easily be artificially suppressed or rearranged. Therefore, this could mean that in authentic identity development in a cross-cultural context, a more subtle integration of the past and present might be necessary rather than total self-reinvention. She said:

> Walking downtown once, I thought I saw my mother, the gust of a ghost breezing through my reflection in a store window. I paused, starring at my mother's daughter. Dalia, Um Yousef, had bequeathed to me the constitution that could not breathe while holding hands with the past. She could isolate each present moment while existing in an eternal past. I thought at that moment that no other soul could understand me as she might (p.174)

Furthermore, throughout she resides in Philadelphia with her housemates, all of whom have become accustomed to contacting their parents, while Amal stays "unperturbed" and experiences

> So, in Philadelphia, while my housemates made frantic calls to their parents, the landlord, the health department, and insurance companies, I was unperturbed. While they acted as if their world had come to a shitty end, I felt a sweet nostalgia and longing for old friends. She experiences intense nostalgia for her homeland the divide could not have been greater, nor could it be bridged. Palestine would rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced" (p.175).

The case of Amal proves that to fit into a new culture does not mean to adopt all its aspects, especially those that fundamentally contradict the original cultural values of a person. Her struggle indicates that there has to be a critical view when moving between two cultures, knowing what to take in and what's essential to hold from one's heritage.

This unfinished cultural tension in Amal's life is a strong example of how nostalgia can persist and mold an individual's identity years after initial exposure to a new environment. It simply illustrates the fact that the process of cultural adjustment can at times be much more complicated and extended than merely the time spent in a new country.

Accordingly, Amal represents a conflict with integration into America and the fact that she has no concrete success in her homeland, Palestine. She is indifferent to her life in the United States, although one feels the tendency to conceal a form of nostalgia for the past, from which she tries to let go. This conflict inside her keeps her from becoming integrated into American society. It is a call from her brother, Yousef, that gets the dampened feeling of nostalgia raging furiously, and Amal finds herself having to revisit her old family and world:

> Another year passed. Whatever you feel … I kept it all in. Until one day when the telephone range at five A.M. Half-sleeping I picked the receiver. "Hello." "Aloo," answered an accented voice. "Amal?" "Away," I said, suspecting his identity and fully awake now. He chuckled, a sound I could recognize anywhere, it was the muffled laughter that first escaped from the right side of Yousef's mouth, then stretched a smile across his handsome face… "Finally, little sister! We've been trying for months to find you." Someone took the phone. "Amal! Habibti, darling! We found you." It was Fatima. Amal. I cried at the sound of my Arabic name. (p.179-180)

Her repressed nostalgia bursts out again, even from the land of the United States, where she had relocated in an effort to blend with the majorities and gain some privileges that Palestinians were denied. But to build a one-way identity on the ruins of her original and rooted identity proves to be destructive, like a person who exaggerates his national, religious, and cultural identity to an excess that does harm to himself and his surroundings.

3.7 Identity Formation and Deconstruction

The Arab American novelist and human right activist Susan Abulhawa's work deals mainly with the quest for identity through the experiences of its protagonist, Amal. Throughout the novel the reader can notice, an exilic narrative voice represents the collective experiences of millions of Palestinians through the symbolic journey of Amal.

The story portrays a complex interplay of personal identity and collective history against the background of the displacement and diaspora of Palestinians. Abulhawa's work applies to the struggles of people attempting to hold on to their cultural identity in the challenge of life in exile.

Amal explores the profound effects of displacement on an individual's identity, attachment to their native land, and ability to navigate the challenges of adapting to unfamiliar cultural surroundings. The text explores the themes of nostalgia, trauma, and belonging, all of which contribute to the search for identity within the Palestinian experience in a nuanced manner.

Through the use of Amal as a symbolic character, Abulhawa constructs a story that transcends individual experiences, resonating with the broader Palestinian identity that is endangered by historical and political disputes. Hence, it serves as both a personal exploration of one's true identity and a communal testament, illustrating the intricate interaction between individual experiences and broader historical narratives.

The novel delves beyond the depiction of a superficial Israeli-Palestinian struggle or a simple retelling of historical past events. Rather, it highlights an even more internal existential struggle for identity, shaking the characters from within on both sides, with a focus on the Palestinian experience. According to Abulhawa, such inner conflict has widespread negative effects on the physical, spiritual and psychological levels of the characters in the book. The book narrates an in-depth description of the identity crisis the characters face in the novel and how exactly displacement and conflict shape one's sense of self and belonging. By locating this internal struggle, Abulhawa opens space for a complex investigation of the human cost of long-term conflict and displacement.

The narrative demonstrates how the struggle for identity becomes so overwhelming that it comprises most of the external conflict, overflowing into people's actions and perceptions. By doing so, the author allows readers to look beyond politics and into the complexities of the Palestinian condition in order to understand its deeply personal implications stemming from the

state of cultural and geographical flux. On this level, Abulhawa establishes a multilevel investigation of identity formation under siege, focusing on people's resistance and difficulties who are caught in the crossfire of historical and contemporary conflicts.

Toward the end of the novel, Abulhawa raises her text above immediate conflict and strives to move beyond themes of war and hatred. This is evident in the subtle characterization of Israeli soldiers, especially through Amal's perspective. The description Amal gives of a soldier, manifests in an internal, complicated struggle, outlining the tension between professional duty, loyalty to the Israeli cause and the innate virtues that are human. This description enriches the story by showing that the impact of the conflict goes across cultural and national lines to haunt individuals on both sides. Amal's detailed portrayal of the soldier through her eyes is relevant for a number of reasons: It humanizes the 'other', portraying the Israeli soldier not as some monolithic enemy but as an individual entangled in moral dilemmas. It reveals Amal's capacity to empathize and observe, even in some of the hardest moments. It underscores the universality of inner conflict in situations of political and military strife.

It is this narrative choice by Abulhowa that embeds a dimension of depth into the novel about identity and conflict," a lone bead of sweat traveled from soldier's brow down the side of his face. He blinked hard. And a solitary drop of sweat travels from his smooth skin, still too young to need a regular shave. The power he holds over life is a staggering burden for so young man" (prelude xiii). The author has explained how the soldier is in such a crucial state of emotional and physical trauma. That single drop of sweat indicates the inner turmoil and burden that has been put upon him. The narration about his youth, "still too young to need a regular shave," contrasts with the "staggering burden" he carries to highlight how tragic it is to bear responsibility at this age. The passage is essentially incoherent, showing a fractured and severely stressed individual displaying almost a deep analysis of explicit harsh realities of war and their immediate effects on young soldiers.

Abulhawa uses home as something fragile and transitory element for her characters to suggest the impermanence of identity with respect to dislocation in Mornings in Jenin. One such example are characters like Amal, who had to flee time and again and lost their sense of self. The author particularly underlines the challenge of developing a sense of belonging within an uprooted and indefinite existence. Such a narrative choice does evidence the intrinsic association that exists

between place and identity, showing how displacing could upset the normal condition of self.Hasan speaks to Amal about the value of land in constructing one's sense of being and belonging:

> 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. Upon death, our physical bodies return to the earth. She, in some sense, owns us. Palestine owns us, and we own her (P.54).

In a word, it encapsulates the deep relationship between human beings and their homeland. It is through this intergenerational dialogue that Abulhawa reveals how the land, as a question of identity, is passed on from one generation to another. That act of transmission itself, effected through characters such as Yehya, Haj Salem, Hasan, Amal, and finally Sara, further underlines the resilience of cultural identity against displacement. The author therefore describes land not only as a physical space but also as an important constituent for the development and sustenance of identity. This theme has been echoing throughout the novel about how the loss of land may lead to a situation of identity crisis, while the memory and hope of return may act to bond people in a community who were otherwise displaced.

Identity becomes very central and multifaceted in the novel. Abulhawa brings forth many characters who relate to their Palestinian identity differently. These are characterized by personalities such as Dalia, Yehya, Hassan, Haj Salem and Darwish from Ein Hod, who were deeply grounded in their Palestinian roots and had a fierce cultural pride of belonging. Their being refugees in Jenin somehow did not weaken their identity but rather enhanced their belonging to their homeland, Palestine. This constant self-awareness is in sharp contrast to people who struggle more profoundly with issues of identity.

Abulhawa captures this in the return of Yehya from Ein Hod. The news and literal connections, like fruit from their old trees, cause collective joy amongst these identity-conscious individuals about their forbidden homeland. This scene does several things in the narrative: It reinforces that Palestinian identity runs strong in some characters. It illustrates that through memory and concrete connections to the homeland, cultural identity is sustained. It reflects the power and strength of this community, considering that they have been displaced from Ein Hod. It shows how emotional and psychic attachment prevail even after a physical break. By contrast, Abulhawa crafts a richly complex picture of how identity is constructed and perpetuated in

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conditions of exile and displacement. In that way, the novel does not represent identity as something fixed but dynamic and, at times, controversial in human experience, more so within the realms of political conflict and forced migration.

Contrasted most in Abulhawa's representation of Amal and Ismael/David is the tangibility of characters rooted firmly in their Palestinian identity. The text traces the long, painful process of identity formation within displacement and cultural conflict. This is Amal's struggle for belonging throughout her life, a representation of a hard fight that those who grew up in exile or under occupation had to put up with. It is her failure to define an exclusive and clear identity that brings forth bigger concerns about the displaced Palestinians, especially the newer generation of people who have never experienced the homeland themselves. The character of Ismael/David represents an even more acute crisis of identity. His change of name from Ismael to David, as well as his learning about his true parentage, presents an acute inner conflict. This character's story thus exemplifies the ongoing effects of displacement and separation from family and cultural roots. The confusing identity/character crisis arises because of the location between two cultures, religions, and languages. The psychological cost involved in living with an undercover or repressed identity. It also exemplifies the potential for identity crises to emerge even during adulthood, in cases where situations change and some deeply held self-conceptions are challenged.

In this contrast between the characters who have lost their sense of identity and those with more stable senses of self, Abulhawa emphasizes how, in very different ways, displacement and conflict bear an impact on the formation of one's sense of self. By means of such a narrative choice, complex explorations of the processes of identity become possible as a fluid, often conflicted dimension of the human condition in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

The internal struggles of Amal and Ismael/David humanize the broader political conflict, showing how large-scale historical events can hit hard on individual lives and identities. It is through these characters that Abulhawa opens up for the reader an opportunity to contemplate the personal and psychological dimensions of displacement and cultural conflict beyond the political rhetoric in order to connect with what that really means in terms of human cost.

3.8 Rediscovering the Self Through Place

Susan Abulhawa skillfully uses memory as an overriding narrative device throughout Mornings in Jenin, resonating with the philosophical position taken by John Locke that memory is central to personal identity. This facilitates a number of functions in the novel's structure, themes, and emotional depth.

The structure of the novel, based on memories and flashbacks, is similar to the experiences of exile and displacement, but fragmented. Abulhawa starts to tell the story in 2002, then goes back 60 years in time, creating a time structure that mirrors these leaps and rifts in Palestinian history. In this non-linear approach, it underlines events of the past lingering in the realities of the present day, proving that history is not just a background but rather an animate constituent of what people fight for.

Memory also serves as a major factor in establishing and continuing identity in the novel. The author, Abulhawa, manages to explain how individual and collective identities are constructed through acts of remembering. Characters separated from their homeland remember that memory becomes a lifeline to their past and a means of retaining cultural and personal identity in the face of displacement.

Abulhawa has built a beautiful narrative structure into Mornings in Jenin to place a firm and very powerful, effective connection between Palestinians and the land. The step back from 2002 to 1941 does a lot of important work within this brief passage: it allows for historical background information in the form of a preoccupation baseline against which readers could place in context the dramatic changes that would follow Israel's establishment; foregrounding the cultural roots via a description of Ein Hod village during the harvest season, thereby pointing out agricultural traditions and the rhythms of Palestinian life; and it shows the simplicity and peacefulness of the peasantries of the Palestinians concerned with everyday matters, setting up a clear contrast between that period of time and the turmoil and losses that will then be described.

This relationship between people and land is presented as core to Palestinian identity and is perhaps symbolized by the death of Yahya carrying a souvenir from his land, indicating people's inseparability from their land for instance when they cleaned Yahya they found olives in his hand and some figs in his pocket. Starting with earlier generations, Abulhawa traces the effect of

displacement through many generations and shows how this connection to land stays with those who never really had the opportunity to experience it.

The early chapters lay the foundation for a Palestinian identity inextricably linked to the land and provide a backdrop to later investigations of identity crises and nostalgia. This peaceful era that the story starts with thus opens up a sense of tension since one is expecting an explosion of conflict and displacement. Such structure allows Abulhawa to meet the challenge of effectively representing the deep impact of occupation and dislocation on Palestinian identity through the land as a central motif threading through the entire novel and enhances the emotional resonance of the characters' experiences.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Susan Abulhawa makes a riveting account of a Nakba and the years that follow, using narrative techniques through which she amply demonstrates how displacement has influenced Palestinian identity and culture. The tone and strategy of the author are to intertwine the historical background with several individual accounts. Take, for example, the case of Yahya, who finally manages to reach his village. In this way, these outstanding historical events acquire an individual face and make the consequences of this displacement very real and close to the reader. Abulhawa, for example, retains the vivid description of abandoned homes, foodstuffs preserved in them, or a mosque being turned into a brothel as a symbol of the suddenness of displacement and the erasure of Palestinian heritage. In this sense, the narrative choices underline strong contrasts between life before Nakba and reality after displacement, pointing out the magnitude of cultural and personal loss. Moreover, the author illustrates spaces that are physically retained but whose cultural meaning has been removed, intensifying the complexity of the act of displacement. By emphasizing the role of memory in maintaining cultural identity despite a physical locus, Abulhawa builds up a narrative that will teach readers not only historical issues but also how to feel from the deeper sense of losing vision and orientation with displaced Palestinians. Abulhawa's skillful writing makes this novel a very influential medium for working out the long-term effects of displacement on individual and collective identity in the Palestinian context.

Amal's birth in the Jenin refugee camp in 1955 provides an important element of Abulhawa's narrative regarding the intergenerational effect of displacement on Palestinian identity. Being a protagonist, the life trajectory of Amal embodies that of the second-generation refugees born into the Nakba after-effect. Immediately, her birth in a refugee camp establishes the

convoluted relationship between place and identity that pervades this novel. Of special consequence is Abulhawa's decision to make Amal "open her eyes on the miserable lives of the refugees." This narrative decision accomplishes several things: It establishes an effective contrast to the pre-Nakba life described earlier in the novel, underscoring the change that befell Palestinian families. It introduces Amal as a character who is uniquely placed to explore issues around identity and belonging, never having known her ancestral homeland firsthand. The term also brings out the persistence of crises against the grain of how displacement frames the experiences of subsequent generations. Here begins Amal's journey: a journey of self-discovery, her struggle with identity rooted in the limitations and hardships that refugee life had imposed on her in childhood. In the person of Amal, Abulhawa explores complexities in cultural identity formation in exile, the psychological dimensions of inherited trauma, and challenges to home-making articulated in a homeland one has never personally experienced. Abulhawa's narrative approach can examine the subtle ways in which displacement continues to influence Palestinian identity across generations, making Amal's story both deeply personal and broadly representative of the Palestinian refugee experience

The formative years of Amal, more precisely the experiences she had by listening to the poetry recitals of her father, act as a metaphor for cultural preservation in exile, as reflected in the title of the novel. It is striking, perhaps more than anything else, how oral tradition and family ties play their role when people seek to maintain their cultural identity in conditions of displacement. However, Abulhawa contrasts very intimate moments with traumatic events like the 1967 war witnessed by twelve-year-old Amal. This juxtaposition will help the author travel through the intricate play of personal experiences with historical events in the formation of both individual and collective identity," I stood again, careful to peek without being seen. All I could see of the soldiers were their legs. They wore big boots that seemed to stomp my body as they walked about. They had bombed and burned, killed and maimed, plundered and looted. Now they had come to claim the land." (p.63)

Abulhawa's portrayal of Amal as a product of refugee life and a witness to continuous war adds additional layers to the exploration of the development of Palestinian identity in exile. This technique has the potential to enhance involvement with thematic matters such as cultural

resilience, the psychological effects of repeated trauma, and the difficulty of preserving a sense of identity throughout long-term displacement and conflict. She said:

> Just then, the Adan began to pour itself into the air. Into my skin. "Allaaaaaahoakbar, Allahoakbar..." The Adan sang from several minarets at once. That melody, which I had not heard for far too long, flowed unhindered to the moth-eaten corners of me, running through me like a river, like baptismal water. "Ashhado a la ellaha ella Allaaaah, Ashhado an Mohammadun rasool Allah..." I sat there, eyes closed, opening the gates to a wounding nostalgia, and longing for my lost family, for my lost self, and I let the song of a people swell the pause that climbed onto the end of Ari's question. Where is your brother? Yousef? "Hayo ala salaaaaat. Hayo alalfalah..." And the church bells of the Holy Sepulcher rang, lilting to the cadence of my sweetest and bitterest memories (p.223).

Amal's return to Palestine after thirty years of absence, as presented in the novel, firmly illustrates how deeply memory is linked to identity and place within the conceptual framework of exile and repatriation. The long-lost "Adhan" call to prayer that Amal experienced was a positive example it brings a deluge of memories back to life and reconnects her with her cultural and religious heritage.

3.9 Postcolonial Reading of the Novel

One of the most popular literary devices used in postcolonial writing is intertextuality. The device is, in some ways, a critique of colonial speech and its attempt to control the "other." This approach goes beyond the literature produced after the colonial period. According to El Hussari(2010), "postcolonial literature critically and subversively analyzes colonial rhetoric expressed in various Western writings", (p.107). The main purpose of this is to challenge colonialism and the power relations that it sustains. Postcolonial writers, especially those who parody and mock the literary characters of the colonizers, are trying to uncover their perceptions about the gap between the North and the South, a gap that has remained invisible for many years to the readers in the West. Such polyphonic narratives by postcolonial writers challenge and refute the stereotype of the colonial "other" and deconstruct notions of colonization, superiority, power, and race. Their narratives are impacted by several voices, creating disputes, conversations, and monologues that give intertextuality to postcolonial storytelling.

Morning in Jenin is a work par excellence of the literature of the post-1948 exile Palestinians and sums up all the important themes of post-colonial discourses, with a focus on the ideas of the colonized peoples in exile. It deals with key themes of homeland, dislocation, diaspora, resistance, suffering and loss. This work explores the concept of exile as the act of being forcibly removed from one's homeland by a colonial power, specifically in the context of Jewish occupation. It firmly places the condition of colonialism within the greater exile discourse by incorporating various post-colonial concepts. Susan is a Palestinian intellectual in exile, and through her character, the novel explores national identity, belonging, place, language, mobility, and the quest for homecoming all are very central to post-colonial literature.

3.9.1 Representation of the Other and Self

The *novel Mornings* in Jenin offers a canvas of identity through the creation of "us" versus "them" discourse: it presents the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a real context and bequeaths tension that stretches on to the self-conception and conception of others of each of the characters. Viewed from a different perspective, the concept of the "Other" does not spring from the activity of one group or another but from the cultural and historical lens each group uses to define itself.

The experience of the "Other" is both personal and social. One can only conceive how disoriented and emotionally disarranged a person should feel after meeting with the "Other," thus compelling him or her to ponder over his or her identity. Yet, for Fludernik, there is always the reinscription of the self in response to the "Other." More often than not, this reinscription comes at the cost of empathy or understanding, as characters and readers fall back on older practices of revulsion or separation from an Other perceived as unlike the self. The conflict therefore becomes more than ordinary territorial disputes and becomes a struggle of self-definition when the recognition of the humanity of the "Other" threatens to destabilize the coherence of one's own identity.

The presence of the Other is ubiquitous in the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, either in a physical sense or embedded in everyday discourse, turning into the social tissue of a group's everydayness and constituting an integral part of its socially shared framework and common identity. According to Bar-Tal and Teichman, (2005, p. 13), this discourse is institutionalized in the perpetuation of stereotypes of the Other through education, with profoundly ingrained perceptions as a result.

Many Palestinians cannot but see their Israeli Jewish counterparts as other than the all-powerful oppressor, just like the majority of Israeli Jews who found it hard to see the Palestinians otherwise. reverse of the stereotype of the Palestinians held by most Israeli Jews." (Roberts, 2013, p. 51).

The novel *Mornings in Jenin* involves the reader in adverse perceptions of the Other from a Palestinian perspective, mainly by way of Yehya's narrative, who ultimately proves to be Amal's grandfather. When speaking about Jews in Palestine, he uses such pejoratives as "son of a dog Zionist" and "lily-skinned foreigners with no attachment to the land" (2011, 7, 46). These sentences evoke images of bad intruders who do not belong on the land. Replacing the very well-known pejorative term "son-of-a-bitch" with "son-of-a-dog Zionist" allows meaningful connotations to strike the reader, especially when Zionism is mentioned in the context. Commenting on the Israeli Jewish people's distinct color, "lily-skinned," which sets them apart from the skin color of the Arabs in the region, further compounds this sense of not belonging. Combining these observations, the perception of Israeli Jews as unwelcome foreigners in Palestine stems from their political and religious inclinations, as well as their physical appearance.

Stereotyping in the representation of the Other by Yehya in Mornings in Jenin is one of the important ways through which intergroup relations and identity formation processes come into being during a conflict. The simultaneous existence of contradictory beliefs and deeply held stereotypes raises awareness regarding the complexity of human cognition in states of conflict. This is cognitive dissonance, which supports Leon Festinger's thesis that humans have the tendency to seek internal psychological consistency when they come across opposing attitudes or ideas. The development and persistence of stereotypes, in Yehya's view, can be explained by social identity theory. The theory postulates that the self-concept of each individual is partially derived from belonging to social groups, which very often leads to in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. These psychological processes, which are a continuation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, deepen stereotyping and put obstacles in the way of overcoming them. Abulhawa describes the developmental process of a probable change in stereotype for Yehya's character, portraying in detail psychological and social aspects related to conflict scenarios. This novel shows, through tension between deeply anchored ideas and new experiences, how stereotypes can be challenged and more differentiated intergroup views developed in prolonged conflict situations.

Mornings in Jenin, Abulhawa reconstructs the incident at the checkpoint where David meets Yousef, revealing subtle insights into the dynamics of power, identity-building processes, and stereotype persistence in the war zone. The scene attempts to summarize some of the most basic theoretical issues in postcolonialism and social psychology studies. David's harsh address to Yousef, "Who the fuck are you, Arab?". catches what Edward Said meant by his term "Orientalism," whereby the dominant group creates and sustains a stereotypical, substandard image of the Other. Homi Bhabha refers to "fixity" in colonial discourse, where the blanket term "Arab" reduces complex identities to simplistic, unchanging stereotypes. David, the Israeli soldier, and Yousef, a Palestinian subject to legal movement restrictions, engage in an interaction where one party holds the power. This situation makes one think of the philosophy of Michel Foucault, who explained how institutionalized power forms, shapes, and defines human agency and identity. David's response to the physical similarity between himself and Yousef falls in line with Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory that makes person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).

However, the similarity between David and Yousef challenges this process of othering, creating a third space, as Homi Bhabha puts it, where fixed notions of identity undergo substantial destabilization. Thus, this scene does become, within the broader reach of Abulhawa's novel, something of a miniature showing how the personal identities of people are framed by large-scale political conflicts and how they themselves frame them. This shows the resilient stereotypes and the hard-won reconciliation in deeply divided societies but points at transformation through the recognition of shared humanity.

Despite being given the opportunity to view the Other in a different perspective after their meeting, Yousef and David are unable to reach reconciliation. David can be seen as the main obstacle to reconciliation due to his depiction as more assertive, stubborn, and confrontational in contrast to Yousef, who shows a readiness to repair his relationship with his estranged brother,"with the sorrow of so much gone so wrong, Yousef asked using the few Hebrew words he knew, then in Arab in case the soldier understood, "Is your name Ismael?" (…) Violent wing-flapping butterflies cluttered David's vision and demons blew in his ears (105).

This implies that violence may play an imperative role in David's psyche, making him see the world around him in a distorted manner while facing rooted insecurities regarding his identity.

Yousef plays a well-rounded role in forcing David to confront a repressed reality that haunts him and exposes his vulnerability. This sets in process a feeling that makes David torn and lost. The butterflies, once the secret past symbolic of David as "Jolanta's butterfly wings," and the demons, as "Moshe's demon," now evoke the feeling of uneasiness and malevolence, pointing out that there is something unresolved, lurking in David's subconscious and continually denied. Through this repetition of symbols associated with his parents and their undisclosed past, the story shows how the truth about his lineage has haunted David all these years.

Yousef's sincere and, in some respect, failed attempts at reconciliation with David answered with violence and bloodshed reflect Yousef, the Palestinian, rather in a better light than David, the Israeli Jew. The reader would naturally sympathize with Yousef's serious attempts to reestablish his relationship with his long-lost brother, despite encountering resistance and aggression. The discovery of his true heritage in Moshe makes David's two different character traits intertwine into one, making this a story of the Palestinian David and the Israeli Ismael becoming one. This change in narrative perspective makes a complete role reversal of the protagonist and outsider, leading to a confrontation between the two different stories, which results in the outward display of extreme pain from the outsider. According to Roberts (2013), such revelations open up a multi-layered but positive process of discovering various aspects of one's identity (p.25). In David, this transformative process starts when he realizes his heritage is Palestinian:

> The truth encroached on his every day and spilled over into David's embedded mistrust, even hatred, of Arabs. The two truths of one man, each as true as the other, opposite of the other, repelling the other in an infinite struggle for David's soul. The confession shook David to the core, unhinging his deepest beliefs. (p. 256)

Implicitly, this passage is religious in nature a revelation of confession that genuinely troubles David and his most basic convictions. One could conclude from this passage alone that David's fundamental beliefs primarily center around his faith, and Moshe's confession of his heritage challenges his faith. Nevertheless, Mornings in Jenin does not directly confront the issue of religion. The duality in such ideas as "us" and "them" and homeland with identity is what the book delves into, for these ideas represent the very essence of David's thoughts in relation to his perspective of the world and identity as an Israeli Jew. Despite his identification with the power of religion, it doesn't fully control him.

It is when David gets to know his Palestinian past from Moshe that a kind of warfare takes place inside his identity. This conflict is representative of something new being born as the old one breaks. This crucial moment, therefore, forces David to re-evaluate some of his more fundamental assumptions about the self and the other that have defined his entire personality . Indeed, this novel's narrative, which had formerly consisted of clear-cut distinctions between good and evil, friend and enemy, Palestinian and Israeli, undergoes a critical shift when David enters what is considered a liminal space where he no longer belongs to either group of people .The collision between himself and others forces David to examine his identity and worldview this process is struck by the deep entrenchment of the "other" in a relational dynamic process. Continuous conflict between the individual and external factors seems to shape, in a seamless way, the formation of the self in a complex interplay between Palestinian identity and its constituent aspects. This complex relationship is further typified by the emotional reunion between Amal and David, which takes place forty years after Yousef and David first met.

When Amal and David meet, they are each given the other's stories. An encounter of this nature requires individuals to first actively engage with the particular otherness of the person opposite to them and rise beyond preconceived notions that label people (Attridge, 2004, p. 33). By doing so, both parties can reconceptualize their own stories, which is a big step in reconciliation (Roberts, 2013, p. 17). That picture of his Palestinian grandmother makes David look back emotionally, triggered by the suffering of people from another background. This was a big change one in the story that he had so strongly believed for years.

> [David] looked in silence at the proof of what Israelis already know, that their history is contrived from the bones and traditions of Palestinians. The Europeans who came (…) had no old photographs or ancient drawings of their ancestry living on the land, loving it, and planting it. (…) They came to Jaffa and found oranges the size of watermelons and said, "Behold!" The Jews are known for their oranges." But those oranges were the culmination of centuries of Palestinian farmers perfecting the art of citrus growing (p. 263)

This recognition of the Palestinians' cultural and historical claim to the land resists the Zionist narrative of the founding of Israel as a tract of land that was empty before Jewish arrival. David, as an Israeli Jew, says that Palestinian history is "invented," which reveals a continuing power differential where the Israeli Jews are seen as taking land from an indigenous population. This

critique he amplifies to the extent that he says Israeli Jews do this consciously; thus, they are lying to themselves and the world about the legitimacy of the State of Israel. David's reflections are particularly strong, as this Israeli Jew speaks heatedly against the general abandonment of the Israeli Jews to the history of the Palestinians, even his complicity in this very ignorance- through realizing how simplistic and stereotypical portrayals of Palestinians in Israeli society had molded him.

In Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin,* the author carefully elaborates on the very complex understanding of victimhood narratives and how they fuel further conflict by being the recurring tendency of characters on both sides to define themselves as collective trauma. The story , thus offers a criticism of how collective memories and victimhood narratives can become self-perpetuating cycles, inhibiting empathy and reconciliation. The novel, through its depiction of psychological and social mechanisms by which such narratives are perpetuated, reveals the intricacies of identity formation in protracted conflicts and the challenges of breaking loose from entrenched victim-perpetrator dichotomies. The "self-hating Jews" idea is utilized for the very first time in *Mornings in Jenin*, showing the results that David is going through on his own self and the Other:

> David's new viewpoint on the Israeli Jewish identity eventually destroys his relationship
> with his family, which ends up tearing in two: "The truth took another toll when he told his
> wife (…) They eventually divorced, splitting down the middle with ideological cleavers:
> their eldest son (…) wanted nothing more to do with his father" (p.256).

Different views on Israel as a homeland can have a big effect on family relationships. This shows how these kinds of problems force people into rigid ideological stances where they cannot be influenced. People with different ideas about Israel's role are seen as having deep ideological differences that either separate them from society or bring them together based on their views. In the story, David decides to support the Palestinian cause and their right to return after learning about his Palestinian background and getting back together with his family. This choice is very different from what his wife and son Uri think because it means he agrees with the Palestinians' claims that everyone is responsible. This stance taken by David is in direct contradiction of the Israeli state; hence, he becomes tagged indirectly, as a "self-hating Jew," a term used to describe Jewish individuals critical of Israel, a gesture viewed as both a betrayal.

The idea of "self-hating Jews" is still continued through the story of Ari Perlstein, the character of the story, and an old friend of Hasan. Ari, whose parents had been survivors of the Holocaust, developed a friendship with Hasan because both he and Hasan loved books and did not have any interest in politics. This harmless acquaintance resulted in Ari being labeled by fellow countrymen as "the self-hating Jew."(AbuJhawa, 2011, p. 287). While Ari's initiative to befriend Hasan was an honest one, for other Jews in Israel, this act of friendship and disinterest in politics was interpreted as a political statement. Their friendship made Ari and Hasan show concern for the other and question their notions about the self. The human factor in deviating from conventional victimized self-images that most Israeli Jews and Palestinians have held makes the construction and preservation of particular self-images important parts of their collective identities.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa performs an extremely subtle investigation of the process of self-identity formation against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, outlining all the complex ways through which the perceptions of self and others interplay. This dynamic relates to several important narrative and identity studies theoretical frameworks: The creation of self-identity is only salient in relation to others, according to Fludernik in 2007; this assertion finds very active illustration in the characterizations present within the novel. It is in the self-images considered by the characters, juxtaposed against perceptions of the Other, that one reveals the relational nature of identity formations in conflict zones

The novel brings to light, more than a little, the victimhood narratives of both the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish sides. The paradoxical situation in which each of the two parties perceives itself as a victim of the self-same mastermind reflects what is known as conflict triangle resolution. This model shows the dynamics by which attitudes, behaviors, and the situation of conflict act in interdependence to foment cycles of violence and reciprocated victimization. Abulhawa's narrative technique of setting these rival victimhood narratives side by side accomplishes two things. It reveals psychological mechanisms through which the intractable conflict is sustained. At the same time, it also opens up possibilities for narrative hospitality, where the engaging of the story of the Other might further lead to an understanding of shared traumas and potential paths to reconciliation.

One would think that people who have suffered oppression at the hands of the same entity would be able to develop some sense of solidarity. As the conflict continues unabated, the truth is

otherwise, wherein both parties begin to see in the other an image of their erstwhile oppressor. This is manifested from the Israeli-Jewish perspective through the conversation between Hasan and Ari during the heady days of 1947–48," Hasan, you don't know what it was like. And now we aren't sure if we'll be safe" (…) "I'd do anything for you or your family. But what happened in Europe…" Ari's words faded into the awful images they'd both seen of death camps. "Exactly, Ari. What Europe did. Not the Arabs." (p. 24)

In this conversation, Hasan reminds Ari that the Arabs did not commit the crimes that caused the fear and guilt of Ari's group, which are connected to what happened in Europe. The quote shows how collective trauma (the Holocaust) is used to justify actions (Jewish settlement in Palestine) that cause new problems and unfair treatment of another group (the Palestinians). It is not fair to blame Arabs for crimes that happened in Europe, as Hasan's speech shows. It also shows how complicated historical responsibility is and how moral the Zionist settlement in Palestine is. Thus showing how the hovering ghosts of the Holocaust have led many Israeli Jews to view the Palestinians, thereby perpetuating a process of "othering" to uphold their own victimhood.

The character of Moshe, an Israeli Jewish soldier who kidnaps baby Ismael, has the same tendencies as Ari in regard to perceptions towards Arabs and Europeans concerning the Holocaust. Moshe justifies taking Ismael by comparing the actions to what the Jews faced during the Holocaust, "he thought how unfair it was that this Arab peasant should have the gift of children while his poor Jolanta, who had suffered the horrors of genocide, could not bear a child. It made him weep inside" (p.36) Though Moshe's motives to satisfy his distressed wife may appear genuine, his reasoning seems to be faulty from an outside perspective. Hasan thoughtfully pointed out that the Holocaust was committed by Europeans and not by Arabs, so it is pretty difficult to fathom why Moshe would relate Dalia and Jolanta to the Holocaust.

Five decades since Ari and Hassan's conversation on the roles of Europeans and Arabs in the Holocaust, it is Amal who echoes the same themes when she says, "Palestinians paid the price for the Jewish holocaust. Jews killed my mother's family because Germans had killed Jolanta's." (p. 273). In telling this story, Abulhawa wades into the controversial territory of Israeli Jewish and Palestinian identities. By subtly critiquing Israel within the plot of the novel and through the dialogues of characters, Abulhawa touches on a sensitive issue characteristic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that any kind of critique against the State of Israel is usually interpreted as anti-

Semitic. It has only further entrenched the conflict, pointing out how the shadow of the Holocaust has loomed over the relationship between Jews and the broader non-Jewish world a shadow that has only grown longer with time.

3.9.2 Beyond Enemy Lines: Humanizing the Other in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

The quest for identity is one of the central themes present in the Arab American novel *Mornings in Jenin* by the Palestinian writer Susan Abulhawa. It uses an exilic approach in order to reflect the experiences of millions of Palestinians, the main character of the story, Amal. Amal struggles with the issues of people who live in a diaspora, now influenced by the experience of emigration and the lack of a safe country. Apart from the depiction of history, together with the outer fighting between Palestinians and Israelis, there are more profound issues of exile in Abulhawa's work. As with marginalized people and via Amal and other characters, Abulhawa sought to expose the military-like occupation of the self that depletes the mental, physical, and spiritual resilience of afflicted people, especially Palestinians. In this aspect, the story revolves a great deal around the emotional toll that displacement and the search for home inflict on the individuals living in the diaspora.

The characters in the book are always being forced to leave their homes and sometimes even their lands (like Amal), so their sense of who they are is also skewed. With this uprooted and uncertain way of life, it is hard to feel like you fit. As Hasan tells his daughter Amal, "We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return," (p.54). the author wants the reader to think about how important land is in forming who we are and how we feel like we belong.

The pursuit of identity incorporates outstanding importance for Abulhawa, influencing the direction of her story in lots of elements and exploring critical topics that can be the muse of building realities in her storytelling. Abulhawa utilizes a skilled approach to thoughtfully analyses identity, questioning traditional concern-object relationships that are often perceived as adversarial and conflicting constructs. By rejecting these conventional frameworks, the resistance undermines established norms. By using her exiled voice, distressing reports, declared realities, and ancient bills, Abulhawa's story develops inside the interstitial area - the boundary of interpretation and reevaluation, the transitional place that carries the weight of cultural significance. This dynamic scenario stimulates reflection and resolution within the domain names of war and misery, in

addition to inside the domains of self and the 'Other'. The subject matter factors of Abulhawa's work function as a source of profound suggestion, representing many identities, constructing new subjectivities, interweaving inventive reminiscences, and offering new viewpoints on language and existence.

Abulhawa's narration demonstrates that her revel in diaspora, that is kept to attachment of identification, as an intuitive survival mode to attempt binary oppositions whilst on the similar time being the 'Other'. In due course, the writer brings together the many voices and viewpoints and locates the main character as the narrative's focal observer figure (Amal, coded in the novel as the seen narrator), as the skillful interlocutor who conducts successful dialogues at the height of human strife. When she is putting into words her musings with anxiety and with aggravation, and when she bursts, the narrator accomplishes elaborating and maintaining an impartial and humane voice. The last scene depicts Amal watching carefully at the muzzle of a young Israeli soldier's rifle ready to fire at her at Jenin camp:

> AMAL WANTED A CLOSER look into the soldier's eyes, but the muzzle of his automatic rifle, pressed against her forehead, would not allow it. Still, she was close enough to see that he wore contacts. She imagined the soldier leaning into a mirror to insert the lenses in his eyes before getting dressed to kill. Strange, she thought, the things you think about in the district between life and death (prelude, III).

Initially, the conversation starts by introducing Amal's inner dialogical contact with the one who patiently remains, stepping aside from the hostility of war. She operates the climate of bonds with entities that were never, in reality, to situate her in essential relation with what is 'beyond the immediate', the rise of the originality of the potential of a human being. Amal's questions are aimed at the things that could go wrong with the other person as well as with the living beings in general. She magnifies the normal feelings of one who is about to die into moderate attributive descriptions for the young Israeli soldier and gives her the image as someone with more ore potential to become a success instead of a murderer. Despite the author's invocation of the themes of reflections on death and the time that comes before death, she complicates matters by evoking a 'diasporic vision of reality' (Abu Shomar, 2013, b), thus understanding life as an art and making feasible the actuality of other feelings of peace, which is over and above art as the major support of love and creativity. This space of enunciation gives her the instruments to decode the critical ethics of the present

situation through invention and finding common ground with the other side of communication that is not purely political but involves personal factors as well.

The liminal state skilled by using Amal at some stage in the narrative is reaching its fruits, growing a vital hole in which she turns more and more passionate toward the 'Other' above all else. As Amal enters the domain of the 'Other', she is closer enough to figure out the younger Israeli soldier's inherent and untapped human traits, which is a good way to go beyond the inflexible framework of politics within the presence of humanism. As the tale nears its conclusion, Amal observes:

> He blinks hard. And a solitary drop of sweat travels from his brow. Down the side of his face. I watch it fall and note his smooth skin, still too young to need a regular shave. The power he holds over life is a staggering burden for so young a man.
>
> He knows it and wants it lifted. He is too handsome not to have a girlfriend nervously waiting for his return. He would rather be with her than with his conscience. With his burden or with me.
>
> I know he has killed before. He knows I know. But he has never seen his victim's face. My eyes, soft with a mother's love and a dead woman's calm, weigh him down with his own power and I think he will cry. Not now. Later. When he is face-to-face with his dreams and his future.
>
> I feel sad for him. Sad for the boy bound to the killer. I am sad for the youth betrayed by their leaders for symbols and flags and war and power. For an instant, I think he could be my nephew. But no. Uri has no doubts of his duty to kill for Israel. This soldier is not my nephew. Strange, strange, he is handsome and I, loving (p. 305-6).

As in the case in the scene where Abulhawa meets: the soldier who aims to kill, she is not only concerned for herself but equally feels the pain of the soldier's girlfriend, who will possibly lose her daughter to the bullets of the soldier. Critical consciousness leads to the development of a compassionate voice in her, which does not prosecute the soldier for the wrongs that he has done since both of them are capable of having a tragic and suffering experience. His description of her as a 'mother' and a 'dead woman', the description of her eyes, and the thought that 'he will cry' show how deeply her critical consciousness has developed.

Ironically, through a process of abstraction or effectively erasing the specificity of the ideas that rightly belong to war, Abulhawa displaces the very framework of a dialectical opposition and enters a dialogic process toward the recognition of the Other. In effect, by entering a dialogical relationship with the soldier, she raises her consciousness and reveals multiple voices, which implies polyglossy, as supposed by Bakhtin (1986). This quest for dialogic interaction gives rise to what refers to as 'critical consciousness,' a concept that captures a 'third space positioning'; this is a state in which identity is neither fixed nor dual but is situated in between two worlds, cultures, and languages.

Before this encounter scene, Amal also visited territories occupied in the year 1948 (also referred to as 1948 territories) after coming back from the US in her search for her father's old friend, Ari Perlstein. Ari is now a Jewish German professor's son; however, he has grown up and is now an elderly professor who was never married. The childhood connection formed before the wars and political strife that separated them is a valuable asset for Amal's understanding and her point of view of the situation of the young soldier, which she claims is betrayed by his "leaders", "symbols", "flags", "war", and "power". On this particular , her empathizing comments regarding the young soldier are relative to the negotiating dialogue between the pre-war memories of friendship, diaspora, motherhood, and the sadness of the lost brother. She is in dialogue with these antithetical concepts that move from separated descriptions to a complete whole that refers to divisions and fragments that have so many forms as to make the whole truth meaningless (Fernandez, 2009).

Amal has placed these structures purposely as a response to the politics of nationalism as a potent force that does not encourage a humanistic appreciation of the Other. In an attempt to find basic lines of human commonality, she creates a performatively brave space wherein she rises above the political. In her mindset, 'dreams and future' are seen as symbols in regard to political betrayals and manipulation by leaders. This is the case of Amal, whose mobility results in a 'productive crisis' that enables her to find ethical latitudes within emotions and situations she encounters. For Amal, this crisis emerges in terms of critical places that are not physical that can be inhabited, only spaces; thus, she can be constantly in the process of constructing and deconstructing the new self as she moves from one place to another. Therefore, existence in these spaces/contexts allows for new understandings and formations of the self beneath which lay

pluralized ontological subject positions that are differentiated and hybridizing and upon which such humanism can be grounded.

In the novel, Abulhawa masterfully weaves together the stories of those affected by history and political strife. At the beginning of the novel, before starting the political conflict in Palestine, the author narrates about the main characters, proving that they are people like other people. Her play starts by drawing the viewers' attention to the fact that two families, the Abulhejas, who are Palestinian, and the Perlsteins of Jewish origin, live in the village of Ein Hod. For Abulhawa, such an image of shared respect and relationship is instrumental in presenting the audience with the idea of human relationships that are not defined by differences in cultural and faith affiliation before politics distort these bonds. This rather profound, nonsexual friendship is also underlined by the close friendship of the children of both families, Ari and Hasan, as well as the friendly, supportive interaction of the women, Basima and Mrs. Perlstein, who feed each other's children and children stay with each other during the visit.

3.9.3 Subaltern Representation

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian Arab writer whose place within the canon signals the complex overlapping of subaltern voices in much of the most compelling contemporary literature. Abulhawa was born in 1970, and her work personifies the difficult life led by what is called double oppression, oppression as a Palestinian under Israeli occupation and as an Arab facing Western cultural prejudice. Despite these multilayered barriers, Abulhawa has gone on to effectively give voice to the Palestinian subaltern experience through her literary contributions. It is in her novels that she has treated the broad topical fabric that comprises a large part of the Palestinian narrative: identity formation, resistance, the pursuit of freedom, the persistence of hope, the omnipresence of death, martyrdom, and exiled life. It is this thematic depth that gives breadth to Abulhawa's nuanced portrait of Palestinian life and struggle.

Abulhawa's work has gained prominence both in her local cultural environment and in the international arena, thus actually increasing the voices of Palestinians across borders. Her merit is part of a larger literary movement in the making related to the Palestinian tragedy, characterized by the general mission of defending their land, protecting their right of return, and reclaiming culture while countering narratives aimed at delegitimizing Palestinian claims. This new crop of Palestinian writers to which Abulhawa belongs only further underlines the strong potential of

literature as a tool for cultural preservation, identity affirmation, and political resistance. Rather than primarily serving as recorders of the Palestinian experience, these authors find their work highlighted in shaping discourse on Palestinian rights and identity in the face of continuous conflict and displacement.

Abulhawa is at the forefront of this new generation of Palestinian writers who prove that literature is a great means toward cultural preservation, identity affirmation, and political resistance. Therefore, what this new wave of writers does is more than document the Palestinian experience; it delves deep into the making of the discourse around Palestinian rights and identity beleaguered by unrelenting conflict and displacement. Thus, Abulhawa joins the ranks of a cultural ambassador and champion of Palestinian rights, way beyond literature. One might think that it could be capable of handling intricate questions within a subaltern situation—coming out with effective literature that puts a stamp of resistance, resolute and creative, on the Palestinian voice in the face of multifaceted oppression.

Susan Abulhawa's *Morning in Jenin* is a complex and multilayered look into the Palestinian experience, focusing on the story of the Abulheja family, and in particular Amal, through which to explore broader perspectives of social and political interests. Abulhawa gives a rich and complicated account of Palestinian life, one in which this reality differs profoundly from the simplistic and often stereotypical portrayals in mainstream discussion. Amal's story indeed chronicles the subaltern experience and gives an insightful look into the emotional, mental, and physical travails of Palestinians under occupation and in refugee camps. Abulhawa masterfully weaves the threads of personal narratives with those of historical events in a manner that exposes complex dimensions of Palestinian identity at the mercy of displacement, trauma, survival, and the struggle between tradition and modernity. It engages readers with the everyday events of Jenin refugee camp life and helps them reassess these stereotypes through the strong Palestinian identity and pride in resistance. Eventually, *Morning in Jenin* works effectively as a literary voice to highlight something outside narrow confines-what is often spoken of and rarely talked about or even listened to: a Palestinian perspective on displacement, identity, and human rights.

In *Morning in Jenin*, Abulhawa weaves a balanced presentation of the Palestinian subaltern experience through the character of Amal, deftly interlacing personal narrative with large social and political contexts. Therefore, the novel will clearly explain the deep effects of historical-

political forces on Palestinians while emphasizing themes such as resistance, resilience, and hope. The novel challenges dominant discourses and narratives through the perspective of a grassroots view, going on to give insight into the intersectionality of oppression that Palestinians, especially women, face. It brings forth multifaceted aspects of resistance, from overt political acts to subtle cultural preservation. She went on to describe how it portrayed Palestinian traditions and strong family ties, and how it was cultural continuity that provided the means for resistance against erasure. The novel traces, through the process of Amal's journey, the convoluted process of Palestinian identity formation under occupation and displacement; it hence provides a counter-narrative against such simplifications. After all, "Morning in Jenin" is a strong tool to represent the viewpoint of the marginalized, enabling readers to empathize with the complicated truths regarding Palestinian life and the relentless resilience of a people who retain their pride and positivity amidst centuries-long suffering.

Susan Abulhawa's novel has an interesting subaltern narrative of the Palestinian experience, powerfully drawn on the web of displacement, occupation, resistance, and subalternity. In particular, it is through the protagonist's experience most significantly, Amal's that Abulhawa constructs a narrative that gives voice to a historically muted group, debasing dominant discourses and providing a counter-narrative to mainstream representations of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The novel reverberates with a strong message about the consequences of geopolitical upheaval on personal and collective identities. The Abulheja family, with their forced departure from the homeland into the Jenin refugee camp, is a metaphor that underlines the remaining presence of the Nakba within Palestinian society. The narrative has served not only to humanize an abstract concept of displacement but also to specify the transgenerational nature of trauma and loss. Abulhawa weaves a complex portrayal of occupation in both its psychological and social dimensions. It is how the author sensitively exposes the daily routine under occupation that helps to reveal all the power imbalances in silence and subtle everyday forms of resistance.

Doing so exemplifies effectively how occupation permeates every sphere of Palestinian existence and shapes identities and relationships. The theme of resistance is multilayered in *Morning in Jenin*, moving from overt political acts to subtle ways of cultural preservation. Modes of resistance, from armed struggle to oral histories, are spelled out through Abulhawa's characters, through which Palestinians at large affirm their agency and maintain their identity against the order

of systemic oppression. Foregrounding the experiences of the oppressed, Abulhawa's novel is a great tool for raising awareness about the injustices and suffering that Palestinians go through.

The author's skillful mixing of historical events with human tales creates a beautiful fabric that enables the reader to empathize with the Palestinian people's fight for independence and self-determination. In the final analysis, *Morning in Jenin* contributes powerfully to subaltern literature because it identifies Palestinian experiences through fresh, minute, and new writing. It offers not only an expression of voices thus far marginalized but also rebalances understanding toward a subaltern view in its portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with regard to the themes of displacement, occupation, and resistance.

No doubt, Susan Abulhawa amplifies the voices of Palestinians who have undergone avowable oppression and marginalization under colonial Zionism. *Morning in Jenin* is a subaltern portrayal concerning the Palestinian plight, unveiling a representative lens for the broader narrative of the Palestinian people. Using a personal narrative, Abulhawa underlines the human impact of war and its reverberations on ordinary individuals. By doing so, she disrupts the dominant discourse and makes the community that has been marginalized able to provide a counter perspective to the dominant notion of understanding the conflict. Her novel disrupts established narratives and works as a tool for resistance to provide a platform for the silenced voices of the subjugated Palestinian people to resound for years.

Amina (2018) asserts in her thesis entitled *The Portrayal of Palestinian Women in Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* that*:*

> Palestinians are born guilty of belonging to their roots, and for life they have to pay the sentence for a guilt they did not commit. The Israeli colonizer is persecuting an innocent population for the persecution the Jews endured for being Jewish; they are making the Arabs who thought the Jews were poor souls seeking refuge; live the same terror they fled from, a terror caused by Europe not the Arabs (p.88).

The subaltern status is a closed social and political status that refers to an underprivileged or, more precisely, a marginalized position vis-à-vis the authorities. Thus, probably the literature of Palestinians is much more concerned with the perceivably constant status of being outsiders in politics, society, and the global economy, both in their homeland and among the diaspora. This

literary genre serves as a powerful tool against subalternity in the hegemonistic discourse and power play the Israeli state and broader political framework have imposed upon the Palestinians. In essence, Palestinian literature focuses on issues of forced dislocation, exile, resistance, identity, and recognition. Thus, the great Palestinian writers such as Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, and Edward Said, through their works, immortalized in the annals of history for their contribution to the Palestinian literary resistance against subalternity. Their works effectively challenge the Israeli occupation narratives and put the emphasis on the Palestinian narrative, full of displacement, dispossession, and an unyielding struggle for freedom. Inspirationally extrapolated from the tribulations of the Gaza refugee's existence, which is that of being uprooted from their respective homes and forced by necessity into seeking refuge elsewhere, are themes that seek to define exile, identity, and resistance of the human spirit.

Palestinian literature is robust and provides a challenge to subalternity as well as to oppressive power structures that have marginalized Palestinians all through their history. The literary works of the Palestinians have greatly contributed to the voice given to, at least, the articulation of the struggles of Palestinians in the deconstruction of the dominant discourses that have hitherto misrepresented them.

In the *novel Mornings*, Amal is portrayed as the protagonist, who was born in 1948 in Jenin, a small Palestinian hamlet, during her life unfolds amidst stormy circumstances. Although Amal has gone through many adversities, from being separated from her family to being brought up in a refugee camp, she turns out to be strong and determined. An enthusiast reader and a curious spirit toward life ease through the hurdles thrown from any direction with grace and tenacity. She is older now but very active in the Palestinian struggle and wants to fight for her people's freedom. All through her life, Amal struggles with her identity, the connection, and the difficulties of living together in peace. She is torn between strong connections to her home country and hopes for a better future beyond the harsh facts when one lives as a refugee. This problem is well known among many people other than Palestinians. These problems give more depth to her story, adding layers to the difficulty.

In all that turmoil and chaos, Amal unwaveringly shows commitment to the Palestinian cause, an epitome of resilience and optimism. Hers is a story of touching accounts about the eternal spirit of Palestinians who have been displaced and subjugated for generations after generations, in

that one Abulhawa powerfully depicts Amal in her novel *Mornings in Jenin* as representative of the subaltern experience in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The novel represents the different constituent elements that go into molding Amal's character and her relevance as a figure for the subaltern: Amal typifies the subaltern condition propounded by postcolonial theorists as representative of that rank of subjugated, hitherto voiceless entities whom dominant power structures systematically exclude or marginalize from their mainstream narratives. She is a Palestinian refugee living in Jenin, thereby standing as a paradigmatic case for the systemic oppression under the Israeli occupation, representing a condition of forced displacement and denial of fundamental rights that defines the everyday lives of Palestinians. In this novel, Amal's life at the refugee camp becomes symbolic of the larger issue: Palestinian displacement, which is defined by socio-economic constraint and limited opportunity, in which subaltern existence is couched. The narrative by Abulhawa now reveals just how radically different the reality of Amal's life was from the rights that were due according to her ancestor's entitlement, further underscoring the continuous processes of Palestinian dispossession.

Though a subaltern figure, Amal turns out to be a strong character. Her struggle for liberation and self-determination becomes a metaphor for the wider Palestinian struggle against occupation by challenging, at all levels, different power structures and dominant narratives in both overt and subtle ways. Amal is fated to fulfill a double duty in the novel: she does not only illuminate the hitherto dark experiences of Palestinians under occupation but also display the possibility of subaltern agency and acts of resistance. From refugee camp inmate to educated protagonist, her journey has nuanced identity formation under oppression, reflecting complex individual agency with systemic constraints. Through the character of Amal, Abulhawa adds to the growing canon of subaltern literature and creates a counter-narrative against hegemonized discourses concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In this way, the novel does not just function as literature but also as social commentary, inviting one into the world of the Palestinian experience, which is usually marginalized in mainstream media and political discourses.

In other words, the characterization of Amal functions as an allegory of subaltern resistance, resilience, and survival. By centralizing this subaltern voice, Abulhawa's work comes as a powerful testament to the continuing struggles of subaltern communities around the globe, challenging its readers to revisit those very assumptions that underpin extant knowledge structures

of power, oppression, and that inhuman capacity for endurance in the face of adversities. catches glimpses of their experiences and hopes.

3.9.4 Between Two Worlds: Navigating Hybridity, Ambiguity and in betweenness

Mornings in Jenin opens in the village of Ein Hod, where the Abulheja family is happy with their lives until the invasion of the Israeli army. The Abulheja family and many other families of Palestinian origin continue to suffer from the results of their displacement in 1948 and also from the lasting collision of the Palestinians with the Israelis for the ownership of the land. The year 1948 is considered to be a starting point of the Palestinian displacement and the following process, which can be regarded as humiliating," 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, instead becoming an infinite mist of one moment in history". (p. 34).

Palestinians have no sense of security or sovereignty in their concept of home because the war has made them suffer and uprooted. 'The Israelis have been amassing weapons with which to expel us from our homes' (p 26). When Palestinians are forced to abandon their homes and all their property, they become refugees who 'stand on the hills and look back at the homes to which they could never return' (p. 33). This experience can be defined by Homi Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness", which means that the aim of feeling at home becomes an unreachable dream. Therefore, the people of Ein Hod were led to dispossession, and Ein Hod became a 'new' emptied village (p. 37). Hence, both refugees end up shifting their perspective of how they belong in strange new environments that they would not otherwise be familiar with. In 1997, reflecting on the locations, Clifford stated that the people are in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering desiring another place'. (Clifford, 1997, p.255). They are forced to live in between the space of displacement, in tents and hovels, and the imagination of the place robbed from them and which they have not been able to reclaim. This existence is what Bhabha refers to as 'In-between spaces' through which people attempt to negotiate belongingness. In these spaces, Palestinians build essential diasporic identities, which are a hybrid of reality and fantasy, the possibility of two worlds. They achieve the opposite of bearing two lives or operating on two different horizons, which are the memory of the lost homeland and the corresponding new orientation of the host land.

Thus, the Abulheja family's four generations are characterized as Diasporic subjects who have suffered through colonial Israeli narratives, thus positioning Palestine as a site of displacement. Since people travel from one region to another in the hope of finding better life options, they undergo a profound feeling of alienation and cannot differentiate between their real place of origin or even ethnic identities. In a state of the world between the abode and the street, they are in a state of reality described by Tyson (2011) of the 'unhomed' people who, despite being residents of their homes, have no sense of bearing any cultural ownership of homes and, therefore, no sense of self at all. The fact that memories of pain continue to linger in residential spaces therefore transforming common homes into sites of human suffering, makes it difficult for these subjects to feel at home and thus complicates their subjectivity and belongingness. Hence, home is often narrated by recalling memories and getting reminders of the past acts as the symbol of home. within this particular framework, the notion which states that the 'past is home' (Rushdie, 1991, p. 9) enshrines the notion that the concept of home can no longer be manifested and, therefore, solely exist in the mind. Memory plays an important part in shaping not only the incorporated score but also the personal and collective narratives of Palestinians for generations in Palestine. The stories of home are at the cross-section of memory and history. The practice of imaginative and commemorative work operates at the centre of mediating the characters' experience of feeling unhomeliness in the novel, such as Yousef, Amal, David, and, to a lesser extent, Sara.

A look at Yousef's psychological battles can help understand his/ their complicated nature, which can be attributed to the traumatic year of 1948. Thus, as he recalls, 'The word war has brought me the burden of fear that I bore from the age of five. War and I met formally in 1948' (p. 78). This feeling of defamiliarization is only compounded by the Israeli invasion in 1967. This attack, which dramatically changed the lives of Palestinians, forces Yousef to reconstruct a new vision of his selfness. Returning to his deserted homeland after being detained and imprisoned by Israeli soldiers, Yousef feels the loss of a place that makes him develop into a 'psychological refugee', as Tyson explained (2006, p. 421). His homecoming also depicts the existentialist notion of diasporic return vis a vis homeland but is nonetheless without succour asking for help in difficult time because Yousef feels 'overwhelmed, exhausted, beaten and broken' as noted by Abulhawa (p .73). With the increasing pressure, he faces the task of searching for a place in his native land, which he failed to do. Palestine now appears to be alien to his desire; he laments that the Israelis

"have taken all [...] And keep on taking more" (p. 99). Having gone through disillusionment, Yousef consciously distances himself from his mother and sister and has a "cold indifference" towards them; in fact, he is away from them most of the time (p. 90). Furthermore, he severs connections with his beloved, intentionally avoiding communication and stopping to respond to her letters. Still, the fact that "Letters from Fatima arrived but were unanswered" (p. 91) illustrates the emotional separation that comes from a feeling of utter loneliness from being bereaved.

Within this specific context, Yousef goes beyond the opposition between being at home and being homeless, being in a state of liminality between the two. Due to the sense of trenchant alienation, he decides to join the Fateh Party, whereby erasing one's individuality is possible since even memories of the past cannot provide the illusion of an invented homeland. When thinking about this period, Yousef would later recall these points with a sense of emptiness inside him that defines him (p. 91). After forming a partnership with Fateh, Yousef avoids all possible contact with his family and physical or emotional ties to Palestine and the suffering that comes from their memories; he stops speaking to his mother and sister and puts a physical and emotional distance between himself and Palestine that prevents him from thinking about his home and family. This may be understood not only in the context of the geographical landscape of Palestine but also in the aspect of the raw and painful emotional landscape of the protagonist. However, the only memory that can give some comfort to Yousef is the memory of his father, and now, this is the only memory that is significant and reliable in Yousef's life. The paternal memory can thus be seen as the only positive locus of inclusion in Yousef's fragmented self," [i]t was a daring endeavor, each time a solitary incitement to honor his father's memory […] Yousef kept returning to the pastures with books. These were the conditions of helplessness, grasping at continuity, salvaging what could be kept of their source of strength Hasan, their baba". (p. 90)

From this perspective, home is about having thoughts of Yousef's father in mind, which are associated with the idea of home. These stories are quite inspiring and heartfelt, especially to Yousef, 'who feels he is back in his home after having moved to Lebanon and becoming a father to his child. He sucks in a big breath as he leans back in his seat and lights our father's pipe with fresh tobacco. The smell of his father comforts him and brings warmth inside him' (p. 150–151). He feels like he has no home due to the fact that during the genocide done at the Shatila refugee camp, his wife and daughter were killed. This terrible loss for Yousef was the worst thing that

could ever happen to him; it annihilated him, dismantling him, making him "irreparably undone" (p 179). Yousef gets lost in depression in this particular occurrence, only to rise on the calm and detached shore of vengeance (p.180). He is an embodiment of the suffering of many Palestinians, and this gives others untold scenarios of the violence that Israeli use on Palestinian residents.

According to Yousef, he was 'refused, jailed, tortured, humiliated, and sent away' because he wanted to own himself and take over the legacy that history had left him (p.188). Due to violence from Israel, his suffering is aggravated, and he utters, "I no longer possess myself. " "You cannot imagine how much pain I was in, and you cannot imagine how angry I am" (p. 190). This feeling of loss and the state of internal chaos indicate the disruption of the diasporic self, which proves how problematic and fragmented diasporic subjectivity is. Currently, Yousef does not have a house that he can call his own, but he still cherishes joyful associations with the past. By the end of the book, he describes this feeling of being moved: "Everywhere I am alone with my father's books, my bullet, Love and the memory of her, the past and memories of the future" (p. 249). In order to save himself from such situations, Yousef has no other option but to go for a refugee and work in different countries. This journey, which comes to him, bears unexpected suffering and grief. He feels extremely different from what he is at home as he wrestles with this feeling of closeness and distance between himself and others, and between past and present, between a desire to be in the home country yet in some places which he has never been before.In this context ,Bhabha said, "[h]ome may not be where the heart is, nor even the hearth... home may be a mode of living made into a metaphor of survival" (Bhabha, 1997, p. 11).

Amal, like many others, lives in a place that does not feel like home. Since Israel invaded, the people who were born there have had no country to call home. Amal grows up in a refugee camp and does not have a clear sense of where she belongs. She feels split between where she comes from (Palestine) and where she lives (the Jenin Refugee Camp). Instead of going to Palestine herself, she learns about it from stories that help her build what Salman Rushdie calls an "imagined homeland." "I brought to mind all the places of the home that had been made up in my young mind... that I had only seen in my dreams," (p.56) . This tension between the protagonist's longing for home and the horrible reality of being uprooted creates a belief that she is not a native of any land. For Amal, the only way of life is to memorize her roots and call her back to realistic thinking. Her and other Palestinians will be 'the ones who do not have citizen rights, no home, or

no nation while the world will look the other way or will be them or take out them as they are celebrating the birth of a state that they called Israel.' (p. 66). Hence, home serves as a symbol of survival that is only evoked through the faculties of imagination and memory. Such experience compels Amal to construct a diasporic identity that is constantly in a state of transition between different places, past and present, residing in a condition of liminality that has significantly influenced her mental state.

From the very beginning of Amal's life, her life has been one of instability, uncertainty, and ambiguity, which means that she does not even have some of the essentials of her homeland. Stolen youth remains with her throughout her life and drives her into another "third space" where she can remember and feel safe for a while. She says, "Oh, how my senses in the days that followed could still remember the fragrance of the sweet spring flowers" (p. 50). In this place, Amal gets the feelings that Bhabha (1992) named the "uncanny voice of memory" and knows with certainty that "my life before the war returns to me now in memories" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 53). Hence, having a memory that is capable of recalling events that occurred in the past of her life, she sees things from a new perspective. She replies, "I can now recall all the details of that day, but they do not come with a soundtrack, you know,"(p.150). One can say that her real life is in these memories because she has no feeling of belonging to the present, and she is already living in 'makeshift homes' (p. 65). Since she was cut off, she has yearned for the pre-colonisation that was stripped of the natives. Like other Palestinians, Amal explains that they feel they have become refugees and cannot quite assimilate into the territory that they have been living in for epochs. people who had had to escape became refugees once more; Israel began to write a new chapter on human garbage cans. The interviewed refugees quote, "Those of us who stayed were locked up in Jenin" (p.69). Amal, unfortunately, never has a place that she remains and feels she does not really have a home throughout the novel. Amal has to re-imagine where she fits into the context of a home that is still a dream. In this context Peya said (2004):

> unhomeliness is most readily identified in the experience of migrants and postcolonial people, for whom geographic or cultural dislocation are defining traits either because they have been uprooted from former places of identification or because a familiar place has undergone radical change as a result of its colonial past or present. (p. 60)

Amal understands herself as a person who is not at home anywhere but nowhere. On the other hand, the uniqueness of her surroundings is such that it would not be in her existence if the suppressed did not appear. According to Bhabha's theory (1992), her home feeling is unconscious, and the immediate meaning gets lost at that very one time and is seen as a public spectacle at the same time, which is pretty disturbing. When wondering about her past, Amal seems to have a quite vivid perception of being somewhere else with such a sense of foreignness that she cannot tell whether there is presence or absence when she tries to recall those years in her life later (p. 91). These findings reveal that Amal does not maintain unity in her character traits, but rather, she is two-faced and cannot make a decisive choice to be only good or only bad. She feels like she is incapable of identifying with any of them completely, as she is stuck between the familiar and the concealed and cannot abandon her earlier self even though she is coping with her complicated, fragmented nature. This sense of dualism ensures that she is constantly experiencing a condition of inner discord, which in turn makes it difficult for her to find true peace.

Amal's sense of unhomeliness is expressed in even negative psychological behaviour, such as fear and melancholy. In the end, she feels absolutely estranged from herself and all the spheres of life, including her childhood, ancestry and identity. These are feelings that Amal can never rid herself of since she fears love more than anything in the world, which results in her emotionally detaching herself from her daughter despite being a mother as she notes: "Gave birth to a daughter… Yes, I am a mother, but sometimes a mother is more bitter than death… This fear is born from the shadows of a heart more afraid of love than of death" (p. 97) because solitude enable engage in the interlocution between memory and the real self and between the different selves. Here, in this state of isolation, Amal builds a world of her own, hence giving a metaphorical connotation to the idea of home. The death of her brother, Yousef, thus, leads to an even deeper sense of estrangement as she regrets, "With Yousef's departure, I was now truly alone " (p.100). Considering the fact that Amal is a stateless person, home for her is associated with the presence of her family. When her father is kidnapped and her mother is psychologically unstable because of the effects and losses incurred by war, Yousef takes over the role of the girl's emotional support. His leaving worsens her solitude and makes Amal turn to education in the hope that there is nothing left for her but her father's dream .She moves from the Jenin refugee camp to Jerusalem, where she is 'studying at an orphanage by night and a selective academic facility in the day', hoping for a merit-based scholarship to a university . This scene can be considered as a crucial moment for

Amal as it shows her need for safety and stability in contrast to the constant displacement existing in her life.

Amal's experience of displacement produces an increase in temporality consciousness, and thus, she cherishes the thrill of being an alien but at the same time surrounds herself with anxiety about the loss of people and things. As a result, memory has been identified as the main way of mediating the loneliness void since it enables the creation of an emotional sanctuary. She thinks, I cuddled with Baba's embrace in my new bunk, and that soothing breeze to my father engulfed my wound and put me to sleep on the first night in that Jerusalem for sheltered Palestinian girls' (p. 119). Alone, tragedy has struck her by the death of her family, and she is always on the move, which creates an empty shell of an emotional meltdown for Amal. However, such is life, and as she says, "I had long since accepted that one day I would lose everything and everyone," (p. 126-127). Despite the fact that she stays in her country, Amal can be discussed as finding herself in the state of the 'unhomely' since her home is no longer a safe space. The world at home 'scared [her] enough' (p.128) to force her to leave for the United States after she received a scholarship for college. This movement is a desperate desire to run away from the personal mishaps which stem from the traumatic backgrounds she endures. In Philadelphia, however, Amal failed to fit in, stating that she only "spent most of the daylight hours in school and the rest of the time biking all over the city" and any efforts to mingle were "awkward and as expected rejected or ignored" (p.137). However, Amal feels segregation, and that is why there is no way out for her other than to make Philadelphia her home, which continues portraying her struggle between belonging and displacement.

Life in the new country of the United States leads to home-making for Amal, in which she lives "without threats and sediments of war", "free of soldiers, free of inherited dreams and martyrs tugging at my hands" (p.138). However, the freedom Amal experiences result in continuing in neither of the two classes and being in a liminal state instead. In her efforts at reinvention, in a bid to build a new identity and a new home, she even drops her Christian name and goes by "Amy". Amal believes that Philadelphia would provide her with an opportunity to live in peace away from the conflict in Palestine but is disappointed by discrimination, isolation as well as different forms of racism. She also finds herself being an "uncategorizable Arab-Western in-between hybrid, immigrant, and Other" (p.138), hence dislocated and invisible. Hence, Amal's experience in

America does not offer her the comfort she is looking for; on the contrary, it is a continuation of her struggles; the problems of displacement, identity, and belonging are not resolved but intensified and add to the complexity of her process of becoming.

Amal, in her experience in the United States, constructs her identity in what can be referred to as a shameful way. For a time, she says, "The undertone of my life in America was the shame I felt for betraying my family—or worse, myself. But I left myself to American culture and committed to their freedoms" (p.138). This transformation is a kind of resistance against such an ontological status of 'betweenness' that she continues to experience. In an attempt to become a part of American society, she tries to conform to the laws as well as the culture of America in a bid to become "a woman alienated from the past". Although Amal has successfully got her green card and seems to be locked in the United States as her 'new country' (p. 142), she remains uncomfortable in her skin; the tension between her two worlds is revealed through her persona, therefore illustrating her role as the 'unhomely subject' of the novel," I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of that banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world. And I found myself searching books of history for accounts that matched the stories Haj Salem had told. (p.143)

The story of displacement and searching for personal identity is a powerful narrative that tells of the struggles that people face and the emotional turmoil that comes with it. Indeed, when meeting her brother in Lebanon, the protagonist also becomes her true self: "I had thought of little else but to return to my family, to myself" (p.144). Although she managed to create superficial friends, she got socially isolated, and as she notes, "the place I had called home for the past years had become part of me" (p.143). This internal struggle is sometimes referred to as Du Bois 's 'double consciousness,' which makes her not fit into the white world or be comfortable in the Black world, hence denying her a stable and proper connection to either side. Finally, in Lebanon, she gets temporary comfort from her brother: "Safe in his embrace, I stayed there as long as I could" (p. 149); however, she still struggles with the conflict of broken identity as she says, "how it hurt ever sweetly, satisfyingly to be Amal again not Amy the faceless" (p.153). With marriage to Majid, she finds something she has been seeking, 'he became her roots, her country' (p. 164), but the protagonist's way is still that of a continuous search for a home, for belonging, reworded in the note of motherhood concerning Sara.

The political upheaval forcing Amal to leave Lebanon and her decision to come back to Philadelphia after her husband's death are the turning points of her existence. This period, she calls the "center of gravity," is all a person's significant events, which reflects the author's inner suffering in depth (p. 176). One might say their death aggravates the idea of alienation that drives her into deeper levels of the unhomely, where the line between inside and outside becomes increasingly blurred. She depicts her life as one that was wretched, like "savored of ash" and living with the voiceless endless song" (p.192), a reflection of her deep resentment and loneliness.

As Amal withdraws herself more and more into her memories, she finds refuge in the only sort of house that is made available to her in the diaspora, the fantasy house of her dreams, the 'home in sight but always out of reach'. This inner preserve becomes her reservation as she wishes to reminisce about a perfect evening where she says, "I can invoke its purity, that feeling of saturation without a right to demand more" (p. 166). The idea here ,that the author wants to highlight is that home is not necessarily enclosed, with walls and a roof, but rather in one's spirituality and imagination, as it is for Amal.

Amal, in her confusion, struggled to relate herself to the world surrounding her with words that she was living in a house of ice, describing." A prison of her own making, a jail of ice to keep the world away [...] She lost her way, lost some fundamental part of her makeup" (p. 198). In order to counteract this severe level of identity erasure, she decides to go back to Jenin because she under the fact that "[y]et there was a solace, an engagement in [the city], and no matter how torn apart it was, it was where meaning seeped back into that word that had been emptied of all hope and left only as letters. I was Amal there, not Amy" "It was a taller Jenin than the one I had left nearly thirty years earlier" (p.228), Amal finds a semblance of home and identity only through the existence of her friend, Huda. She says that 'the continuity of our friendship was stored in those eyes, and I searched them to see to home, a home that I sought in Jenin but did not find'. (p, 230).

However, Amal is still unable to establish feelings of homecoming even when she is in the city of Jenin. Every time the characters face an unhomely situation, the reader is offered a glimpse into the life of colonized people who lived through double traumatization in the past and in the present. They always live in between two worlds: their native cultures and the external world that they encounter in their current environment.

Thus, David's narrative can be seen as the manifestation of multiple paradoxes between and within which the subject constructs her/his identity. Having been born into a Palestinian family, his Arabic name is Ismael, but when he is kidnapped by the Israeli soldier Moshe in order to take him away from the Palestinian environment and make a new person out of him, that person is David. This transformation of name is one of the ways that show that he was changing from one culture and nationality to another, and his life was a duality of the two worlds. David as a citizen of Israel has been raised to have the cultural values of the chosen country. Nevertheless, the confrontation with his biological brother, Yousef, creates a tone of confusion and doubt in the protagonist's identity. This internal struggle is evident in a fight, where David, getting angry by the realization of his past, gets physical with Yousef, his Palestinian brother. when David starts beating Yousef with an iron rod gives an example of the psychological disorder caused by the fragmentation of the character's personality. A violent temper produces the division between his Palestinian background and Israeli upbringing, which symbolizes the subject's conflicted hybridity. David's story can be described as the experience of this in-betweenness because he struggles with his loyalty to both worlds and feels like a stranger after the truth is revealed to him. This revelation destabilizes the Israeli identity he built for himself and puts him in a state of possibilities and ontological insecurity.

Moshe had been the one who finally had told him, a dying man's confession. Learning the truth of his origins so late in his life had indicted every thought, every love, every conviction that had built David into himself […] This knowledge cast David into a gaping chasm between truth and lies, Arab and Israeli, Muslim and Jew. (p. 200)

The false reality makes David shift between two worlds, which results from the revelation of the truth. He loses his psychological and geographical identity, and homesickness, along with identity crises, sets into him. Due to his lack of knowledge of his forefathers and family background, he makes up the connection with 'a ghost family'. This constructed belonging further stresses feelings of unhomeliness, leading David to grapple with intermittent bouts of psychological depression:

Moshe's confession had left David wondering if he had killed his own relatives in the wars he had fought for Israel. The truth encroached on his every day and spilled over into David's embedded mistruth, even hatred, of Arabs. The two truths of one man, each as true as the other,

opposite the other, repelling the other in an infinite struggle for David's soul. The confession shook David to the core, unhinging his deepest beliefs. (p. 200)

These conditions are the uncanny situation that compounds David's self-alienation. In addition, the aims of the truth "were to take another toll when he decided to tell the truth to his wife [...]. His wife could not keep his secrets" (p. 200). Then, the couple divorces, which results in the separation of their two sons. The elder son, Uri, decides to go with his mother, and the younger son, Jacob, with his father. In this regard, David begins a search for his natural relatives but finds that most have died; Yousef has become a member of the PLO and Amal lives in Pennsylvania (p. 201). Setting up a visit to the United States, David calls Amal and invites her to talk with him on the phone. In the reflection of the remaining members of the Abulheja family, it is possible to realize the impact of the Israeli invasion on people within the country. This scene also represents their feelings about David, the permanent feeling of 'homeliness' and confusion of belonging to two different cultures as he is placed "somewhere between where he belonged to neither" (p.206). He builds a façade, as well as this real persona, even though both are illusory. The deeper he goes into his past, the more confused and uncertain David gets, and that is because he understands that "David 'had not been Ismael for fifty-three years'" (p. 205).The story's elaboration also shelters David while giving him a twisted idea of home and being at home. This is because the factual sequence of events is distorted by the incorporation of flashbacks.

David's story thus reveals how the Israeli attack disrupts family relationships. For instance, while writing the narratives for the three characters, namely David, Amal, and Yousef, the experiences depicted were different. Two characters, David and Amal, are the only ones 'who are the heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities and ragged confusion' (p. 211). However, their relationship is expressionless. They "small talked in the stiffness, aimless conversation to cover over what seemed to be gaps and fraying obligation" (p.205). The brothers' lives are not similar because all three boys experienced loss and tragedy in their childhood. Their parent said, they "came out from the cradle of boundless tragedy." Each one unique is different from the others, but something is always following them, which has been echoed by the other people's minds (p. 208). By analyzing the fate of the main characters in the novel by Susan Abulhawa, it is possible to conclude that oppression and displacement effect the development of Palestinian families. She

explains how the result of invasion is remembered from one generation to another and elicits effects globally.

The state of Sara raises the concept of home to another level where several manifestations of unhomeliness are captured. She thought of herself as an American-born woman although she was born in Philadelphia, but she doesn't have full citizenship that will make her feel fully accepted in society; thus, she feels her identity is not fully complete. This creates a transcultural experience of the kind whereby she has to confront several perceptions of home and culture. The desire of the protagonist to explore her cultural background is often justified by her "strict mother" (p. 202), who "did not speak to her daughter [...] she was never kind." The main character is completely free from selfishness. Save for the uncertainty as to whether the rest of her life may spoil the purity of her children: "She put away clean needs into a forbidden, locked area because she loved her mother, while her mother punished her and humiliated her, offered her gray life, trapped her in an empty and petty existence to prevent her from losing the purity of heart and the purity of her soul, to prevent her from touching the contaminated world with her arms" , Such erasure of the past is intended to help Sara build a stable life in America, which is the grand purpose of the plot. However, the visit of David triggers the process of becoming as Sara feels the need to find the deeper meaning of exploring her family history and the place where she belongs.

> Although Sara was stunned to learn about David and hurt that her mother had kept so much from her for so many years, she was mostly intrigued. She was grateful to know, however belated. To know of her own family. To be invited, in a way, into the mysteries of her mother. She felt, above all, a rare closeness with her mother, the iron-willed woman who suddenly appeared vulnerable, almost fragile, to her. (p.302)

Sara can explore the past because of David's presence. Furthermore, it creates closeness between Sara and her mother as if they are near one another. Thus, being a woman of Palestinian origin, Sara realizes herself through the revelation of the facts. In a bid to find out more about her past, she decides to visit Palestine with her mother and uncle. She visits her to define herself. Thus, she says: " want to know who I am" (p.220). Sara begins a new phase in her processes of transformation and projects herself toward meaningfully constructing the narrative of the self in the present and future, as well as coming to terms with and making sense of the past.

Sara's first steps toward attaining a concept of home in Palestine occur when she encounters numerous questions about her past that remain unanswered. This search for self is attended by a crisis where one's face "is transformed like a wound: disbelief, interest, ravenous of the full story of her life, wounded again by the mother who had withheld so much from her" (p. 223). Sara who travels between different spaces manages to experience a fragmented sense of homelessness that compromises her capacity to build stability of the self. Her self is portrayed as a story that she has to construct in order to make a comprehensive story out of her life. For instance, in the course of her conversation, her focus becomes the continuous question, "Tell me more" (p. 232), but her facial expression requires more than that, a story (p. 235). However, the death of her mother results in having a partial home and self-stories, which does not allow Sara to completely renovate herself and her story.

> In her dreams she bowed to them both. Suddenly, her grandparents, Dalia and Hasan, her uncle Yousef, Fatima, cousin Falasteen, Great Grandfather Yehya and Great-Grandmother Basima, Ein Hod and her great-uncle Darweesh's horses, and all the faces and stories that saturated Sara's time with her mother in those days in Jenin. (p. 241)

Sara's life is changed after she learns the truth, and it is impossible for her to go on living the way she was living before; the stories and memories "slithered like a coating over Sara's dream, and every dream she had after that" (p. 242). She sinks deeper into the dark side of her mind, and the death of her mother is still present in her dreams and nightmares for some time. This internalized grief is a major factor in her feeling of unhomeliness; hence, she agrees that she will return to Pennsylvania, but "Sara's heart will never leave Jenin" (p. 243). Sara is unable to maintain a coherent concept of the matter and dissolves into the writing of the fictional nation's spiritual dictate, as reflected in the letters to the mother who has passed away. Writing becomes a tool that enables the woman to unscramble the plots of memory so that she can tell her story to the world, persons or entities that are hungry for the recognition of their history.

Amal represents 'in-between' since she tries to live two lives simultaneously within two different cultures of Palestine and America. She assumes a "Palestinian-Amreekiyya" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 244) narrative and remains between the two worlds all her life. This is why when Amal is given an opportunity to leave and start a new life in America, she takes it, saying, "I had nothing, no one, to go back to… And to be honest, I wanted to be an American, I wanted to pack away

baggage of past and tragedy and try on Amy for size" (p. 147). Nevertheless, the appearance of her elder brother, Yousef, again brings Amal a sense of affiliation with Palestine, which was buried for a long time. Amal is a woman who tries to live as an American woman, and she still notices that she cannot be free from her Palestinian identity. She said,"It possesses me, no matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. Because it knows the private lust that flamed the beds of all my foremothers. Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past. I am a daughter of the land "(p. 116).

All in all, Amal grows into a woman with sophisticated and complex subjectivity that defines her as a Palestinian American woman at the heart of a diasporic context. Her cross allegiances are thus complex, which she captures as follows, "I had dedicated every waking moment of my existence to one goal- to return to my family, to myself. However, I had also created tangible roots in America 'and in many ways, the country that I had known as home for the past years was part of me '(p. 144). Nevertheless, returning to her remaining family in Palestine does not offer her the security that she needs, as she has been raised in a world which is characterized by 'the improvised dreams and the abstract yearnings' where everything is temporal, not even the parents, siblings or home. (p.126) The domination of the Israeli state over the Palestinians undermines a stable Palestinian nationhood that makes Amal shift to a border existence, which in turn subjects her to feelings of diminishment, displacement, and desire to belong (p.137). This denial of the Palestinians' assimilation into Israeli society forms a notion of exile and diaspora. Thus, Amal and others like her are left with partial identity and constant feelings of displacement.

3.10 A Feminist Reading of the Novel: Female Strength, Resistance, and the Intergenerational Impact of Trauma

Throughout the book, Abulhawa portrays women surviving against a backdrop of social and political turmoil-emblems of resistance and resilience in the face of their personal and collective histories of suffering. Their strength is complex: it entails emotional resilience, defiance of patriarchal convention, and ongoing negotiation of identity within multifaceted socio-cultural landscapes. The novel discusses feminism as research into lives experiencing different forms of women's oppression: the grimness of gendered violence, social expectations, and dispossession. Essentially, it is a study of one major pervasive element: that of trauma, largely in family units, where residuals from one generation to another spread over time.

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This becomes a really complex interplay that deeply influences and moulds the character's actions, relationships, and belonging. The following discussion is going to debate how women characters in these stories exercise the ability of resistance and healing while struggling at the same time with pain, loss, and survival. With the informative feminist theoretical framework used for the analysis of the character journeys, we will light up the interplays of individual struggles and historical-cultural influences that inform their identities.

3.10.1 Symbolic Representations of Female Strength in a Patriarchal Context

The presence of mothers is very fundamental to the progress of an individual, which shapes much of their biological and social transformation to manifest the basics of life. On the biological scale, the feminine anatomy suffers enormous physiological strain during the gestation period and child labor. On the same note, individuals who engage in breast-feeding suffer increased fatigue due to the dual role of providing food for their young ones. Moreover, they have to confront postpartum depression and the transformation their bodies go through, in addition to the challenges of taking care of a newborn when they are at the beginning of life, and therefore, they mostly find it hard to sleep. A mother figure does not only enable a child to be born but spends all her life offering maternal and protective love and care to her offspring. The mother is caring and dedicated to her child.

She becomes the caretaker, teacher, disciplinarian, and pool of unconditional love for her children from the day they are born. A mother's love never budges with intervening circumstances, be it happiness or sorrow, sickness or health. Mothers will also show much protection for their children. They will undergo much suffering from their children, and they will make an effort to provide for them. A mother exhibits much dedication in meeting the needs and providing care when her child is sick. She does this by staying up the whole night to breastfeed the ill child or even sleeping in prayer, asking God to heal and take care of the sick child. Praying is very much prioritized in the schedule of the Palestinians. The majority of Palestinian women are of Muslim belief, and they are strongly attached to prayer. Palestinian women pray for their families,

particularly for the freedom fighters who are imprisoned in the Israeli jail or for their family members who have died and are imprisoned in the Israeli jail.

Palestinian women exhibit determined strength against patriarchal standards, the hardships of life, and the Israeli occupation. Under the colonization context, the women of Palestine tended to put the collective struggle ahead of their striving to secure women's rights as individuals and align themselves with male fighters to protect the interests of their people. Palestinian women are the epitome of resilience in refugee camps; they unwillingly face many challenges every day. The origin of ancestors is of particular importance since the personal association of women with their homeland is very strong; displacement disjoins this association and challenges women at every step of acculturation to the new way of life. Although this may be true for Palestinian women living in refugee camps who have adapted to their tough environment, many of them were thrown into this condition at birth. As much as Palestinian refugee women have shown their strength in the face of disaster, their determination to return home remains unabated, as evidenced by continued claims of repatriation.

The current living conditions in the majority of the Palestinian refugee camps have contributed to many problems for women. Either made from donated tents or with very minimal covering, these communities quickly turned into more of a slum and small houses with no hint of luxury at all. In reality, most of the refugee camps are shantytowns where most of the residents are poor. Added to the psychological trauma of displacement, there are extra burdens for women refugees because they are often denied key civil rights both in the Palestinian setting and in the countries to which they flee. Many females have restricted access to some professional fields or are stripped of their right to work. The absence of entitlements, coupled with the difficult conditions of being a refugee, puts Palestinian women refugees in a cycle of poverty, exclusion, and deprivation. This cycle is further intensified by other factors such as unemployment, migration, or limited resource access.

Many women are faced with the challenge of assuming sole responsibility for the care of their family when their husbands or male relatives migrate for employment to secure financial assistance. In certain instances, women encounter severe situations when their spouses relocate for employment purposes and later get into new marriages in the designated host nations. In eastern societies, it is customary for men to place a high value on familial relationships, presenting

difficulties in maintaining a social distance from their loved ones. Therefore, a significant number of males opt for divorce from their spouses within refugee camps, frequently disregarding their household responsibilities and forgetting to offer financial support. These female individuals not only face the challenges associated with manual labour but also contend with the limitations imposed by the patriarchal traditions that are pervasive in oriental countries.

The Palestinian refugee mothers have shown a resilient obsession with ensuring the security and safety of their children by placing their well-being first. As mentioned, the Israeli military siege and frequent curfews suggest stringent controls on the daily routine of refugees, including children. Opportunities are few, and the mobility of all camp dwellers is hindered by this spatially limited arrangement and lack of autonomy. The mothers assume the normal responsibility of being continually attentive about their children.

Refugee mothers strive to uphold the best standards of living for their children despite the strenuous conditions, creating a nurturing environment where the children are showered with love and tender care. It is in the sorry condition of refugee camps, with simple quarters and disorganized surroundings, that maternal love thrives as a backdrop to the lives of young Palestinians. Children tend to think of their lives as ordinary because they have not experienced much else; it is the only reality they have ever known. Due to the constant love and support given by their mothers, some of the children were able to pursue education, while others started their professional work at quite a young age or even joined the freedom fighter movement. Refugee mothers are not only born fighters, but also give birth to fighters.

Mornings in Jenin tells the story of the Abulheja family over four generations. However, few men remain, so the story is mainly told by the women. In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, being a woman and a mother becomes very important. This story shows how women's roles change on their own, separate from the women's rights movements in the West and in Arab countries. Although it might be true that, during the early days of the resistance movement, women were mostly relegated to the traditional roles of raising the next generation of fighters and managing domestic life, it is still the case that as this struggle for independence combined with a national enterprise, then truly did the dynamics of gender change incredibly within the military front, allowing people of all genders to become actively engaged in the conflict. Palestinian women have become prominent actors in a number of activities within the social and political spheres

aimed at opposing occupation. They have succeeded in making their gender roles compatible with their national responsibilities, and therefore created a new definition of resistance and resiliency (Shalhoub-Kevorkian .2003p, 394).

The loss of a stable social and political condition within the region made the goals of conventional feminism no longer practical, thereby compelling Palestinian militant feminists to revise their strategy by re-configuring themselves into militaristic feminism. Such feminism portrays women at war and perpetrating acts of violence with male soldiers. While conflict and occupation may blur the lines separating female and male roles, they simultaneously strip women of their basic rights to security and autonomy (Tahboub, 2009). Rather than identifying themselves with feminism, militant Arab women tended to adopt the notion of "familialism," which emphasises the central role of the home in their ideology. The perception of women as the main sources of stability was accompanied by the recognition that protecting the family unit was considered crucial and went beyond traditional gender expectations (Tahboub, 2009).

The representation of gender roles in *Mornings in Jenin* is initially based on a traditional division between household chores and militant work. For instance, Amal needs to get her brother's permission before she can marry Majid, and women are primarily responsible for cooking and taking care of children. The potential for militancy and toughness in them comes out in atypical and unconventional manifestations. A large number of these men, including Yehya, Hasan, Yousef, Majid, Jamal, Jamil, Osama, and Hajj Salem, will flee, die, or vanish, thus leaving the ladies to their own devices in a survival fashion that is in no way connected to their male counterparts. This novel constructs an excellent portrayal of how women devise enclaves of resistance and support that generate some of the most poignant areas of the book. In these regions, women symbolise the capability to adjust, support one another, and sustain their families and communities when suffering massive losses and difficulties. Unquestionably, Dalia is the most important character that epitomizes Palestinian resistance, scarifying mother and psychologically suffering.

3.10.2 Resilience in the Face of Oppression

Chapter 3 is titled "The No-Good Bedouin Girl," and it introduces Dalia. She makes her entrance into the book as a 12-year-old girl and the youngest of the 12 sisters, whose parents are Bedouins working in agriculture. "Bedouin" refers to a group of nomads whose roots are in the Arabian desert. There is a frequent judgment that Arabic-speaking people of primarily Islamic

belief are a people apart, "less cultured," and "wilder" than the sedentary Arab population. It is this kind of attitude that helps to produce the rejection and suspicion that the villagers, most of all Yehya's wife, display against the girl. Moreover, the compounds describing her character as "wilful and indifferent to convention," with a perception of "vulgar carelessness," help Basima perceive her as a "shameless thief" who lacked moral integrity. Hasan develops romantic feelings towards her, which motivates him to try to win over his mother's prejudice to marry her. This relationship shows signs of the combination of love and desire and results in three children; such a collaboration of characters is used as a device to put across the central idea of the novel, which questions the possibility of multicultural love and understanding.

In the early phases of the novel, Dalia is presented as an active, handsome, energetic young girl with a vigorous and daring personality. It is only through her resilience and charm that the protagonist finally manages to dispel the prejudices of the villagers, which began when she married Hasan at the young age of 14 years. Basima, her mother-in-law, comes to appreciate her for her persistent and hard-working nature.

In the earlier years of motherhood, Dalia lived in Ein Hod and did not suffer from forced severance from her cultural heritage or displacement from her national homeland. Thus, she experienced normal motherhood, surrounded by people and things that one loved and living in one's home. She was called Um Youcef since her childhood, and she became too attached to her surroundings after the birth of her first son. She appeared green at first but turned into a competent mom with the help of her mother-in-law. She breastfed her baby like mothers used to do in her time. Moreover, she lost some of the firmness of her body after giving birth and was forced to breastfeed. Ten months after Youcef's birth, Dalia went through the misery of delivering a stillborn baby. For this reason, Dalia has gone through a period that is extremely depressing mentally and emotionally alone: post-pregnancy depression, which was made even worse by the immense loss of her baby.

In the context of war, Dalia handles the situation with great flexibility yet strength, showcasing the multifaceted nature of parenting. Dalia's activities are a primal mixture of trauma, taking care of someone and being forced into the making of difficult decisions. Dalia's protective behavior and the ways she decides to manage the risks bear the hallmarks of a mother hardened by the demands of a conflict area. Just as importantly, her emotional labor, as described in acts of

care that are extended even when there are invading armies, serves to highlight the undying nature of maternal care in times of conflict.

Dalia's choice to send her children to family members because of the expected threats in her surrounding area is a clear illustration of the unpleasant decisions that many parents who live in a conflict zone have to deal with. Yet even in an unstable and violent environment, she dials the harm to her children by choosing to be apart from them instead. Her simple acts, such as feeding the fighters and looking after her kids at the same time, show the burden of emotions she carries. Dalia's caregiving duties persist even when there are enemy soldiers in the compound, which is a characteristic behavior of a mother's care ,Resilience and Adaptation. This is also a testimony of a woman's power of motherhood in a politically unstable society, protective of her children even when the odds are high. Through Dalia's character, Abulhawa wants to show how the representation of family life looks like in Palestine and also shows how history affects the private sphere and the transformation of social lives within families.

The first thing Dalia was concerned about when the Israeli incursion into this village took place was the well-being and safety of her children. Holding the six-month-old baby tightly to her chest and the eldest child by the hand, she looked everywhere desperately for a safe pen. Ignoring the acoustic interference from the explosions and her children's screaming, she continued until the end of the bombing. Despite this shock, she acted with her maternal instincts to move carefully through the chaos and protect her child. She didn't give in to fear and panic until the bombing had stopped, and at that point, she only relaxed her hold when her husband arrived. Although she let go of Youcef's hand, she could not help staying close to Ismael, and even when she was being taken away, her thoughts were on her child.

Dalia's leaving was a tragic event in which she made her children promise to be safe throughout her journey. Trying to maintain an equilibrium with the baby Ismael sitting on her hip while also clutching Youcef's hand and adorned in her bridal jewelry, she made her way through the overcrowded and treacherous way. In the madness, she lost hold of Ismael. While Dalia looked around desperately for him, her eyes scanning her bags and the nearby people for signs, she was met with no success. In bowing down to her knees, she cried the voice with which she spoke full of pain and distress, pleaded to God for help. She was overtaken by grief and sorrow.

Due to the loss of her son, Dalia suffered from mental depression and anxiety. At the end of the tiring journey of the villagers and the eventual disabling of all the other people on the hill, Dalia is unable to stop her incessant pursuit of Ismael. She continued in persistent pursuit of her child, searching relentlessly until all her energies, both physical and emotional, were totally exhausted. Having achieved the state of immobility, she spent her last energies on emotional expression, crying, and repetitively reliving that last moment of hugging her son. On a more critical note, Dalia would continue the lifelong search for Ismael within her memories, unable to move beyond the events of that day. She has never been the same since then. She had gradually, over time, become unaware of her failure to take care of Youcef's needs since her emotions had already been consumed by her thoughts of waiting for the arrival of Ismael and his absence. In fact, Dalia's role as a mother to Youcef and as Hasan's wife had become very small, resulting in her transition into a homemaker role of almost only cooking and cleaning for the family due to the sorrow.

Like other Palestinian mothers who experienced several wars and forced displacements, Dalia made her children strong and became even stronger herself. She was very firm with them while disciplining them, except with the youngest one. Being the youngest daughter, Dalia found it very difficult to impose any physical strength on her daughter because she saw the reemergence of vitality and energy in her daughter's personality. With the baby's arrival, Dalia soon felt happy and thus began her long-lost love. She did not feel that happiness for a very long time because she continued to behave with the ice-cold face of motherhood and allowed non-verbal communication as well as silence to communicate to her daughter all day. She consciously avoided hugging and kissing her child lovingly. But late at night, Dalia showered her overflowing love and tenderness on her daughter, who was now asleep and could not raise her eyes, which proved difficult for her to do when she was awake.

Though Dalia's rigidity during the day and emotional distance seemed a sign of coldness towards her children, one must nevertheless consider that this woman did love her children. Still, the serial losses she experienced over time eroded her emotional and spiritual well-being, replacing it with a heightened sense of attention. However, she also exhibited a very praiseworthy maternal trait by assuming a non-interfering attitude towards her family's well-being. She worked out ways to ensure her daughter acquired the necessary life skills, including midwifery, so she would be able to transmit all that she had learned from her mother. Dalia was the most courageous mother who

paid a rather expensive price in terms of children, in particular, her daughter, moving ahead; however, she never really understood this sacrifice. It was only much later that a third party would tell Amal that Dalia had decided, for reasons of self-interest, to remain in the camp during the 1967 war. Dalia would not budge, choosing to stay behind just to frustrate the Jews from occupying the only home her daughter had ever known.

When the conflict broke out in 1967, Dalia's paramount consideration was the safety of her children. Upon Amal's arrival home, learning about the war, Dalia received her daughter with open arms, grateful to a higher power that she had her daughter back home safe. When the bombings started, Dalia did not run; she stood by Amal's side to give her the courage to be strong, as she had always preached. Though Dalia was a quiet woman who spoke little to her children, she was quite aware that her son, Youcef, was in deep love with a girl named Fatima. On the first day of the war, Youcef said he wanted to look for Fatima; it was then that Dalia intervened to tell him that Fatima had left with her family.

Confronted with the sounds of shots and explosions, Dalia refused to flee or hide; rather, she wanted to find the most secure place for her daughter. Moreover, her motherly nature did not stop at her biological children but stretched on to include Amal's friend and even her little niece. Dalia was kind-hearted, unselfish, and unafraid. Despite the danger involved, she exhibited no fear at all when hard-pressed about the children she had hidden in the tight pantry area of the kitchen.

Dalia's humble home withstood a heavy bombardment, a factor that created in her a sense of dread that the attack may have claimed the life of her daughter. Contemplation of this event caused her intense disbelief at the happening, significantly impairing her mental capacity at a time when her family was similarly being torn apart. Indeed, even when Amal later found her mother in a medical tent, Dalia, still in shock, failed to recognize her. Dalia seemed to become aware that Amal was unconscious, trying to realize that her daughter was safe and had escaped the bombing. After the death of her husband and eldest child, Dalia began to deteriorate psychologically, which started to manifest physically in her appearance as well. Following the war, Dalia continued to spend much time in persistent prayer on the same prayer rug, buoyed by the hope that dear ones would return home.

Most of Dalia's work within the camp was focused on cleaning, preparing food, and some embroidery and knitting. She continued caring for her children with much devotion, even when

her daughter came back from the war, as this lady was very stressed emotionally by that time. With the arrival of her son out of prison, Dalia was overjoyed and praised God by shouting "Allahu Akbar." She adequately replaced the caretaker her child needed during times of mental distress for a short while. When Amal gained consciousness from his unconscious state, Dalia was present there despite her reduced mental capabilities, which were the result of the unlucky firing incident. Displaced forcefully, gone through heavy bombings, witnessed many casualties, and withstood the attacks of Israeli colonization, yet Dalia persisted in her unyielding commitment to family and Palestine.

Dalia embodies the archetype of a real Palestinian woman and female refugee who has endured a life full of involuntary displacements, hardship, and emotional stress. The heavy loads put upon them by the Israeli occupation were almost too much for any human to bear. Nonetheless, she proved to be unyielding and resilient, "resilient as steel" (p. 49), steadily withstanding the onslaught of life for her children, eventually sacrificing her own life for the sake of her children. Dalia's relentless battling and suffering slowly took away her energies till she finally left the mortal world. Her spirit, which was characterized by innocence, proved poorly equipped against the harsh realities unveiled by the world.

Abulhawa succeeded in representing the interaction between motherhood, political and social realities. The representation provided implores the reader to acknowledge the impact of history, culture, and individual variables on the perception and articulation of motherhood in the face of conflicting territories that go beyond cultural and political borders.

3.10.3 Power of Resistance, Defiance and Constructing Identity

Susan Abulhawa intertwines two generations of Palestinian mothers through the characters Dalia and Amal in her book. The nature of the relationship that Amal has with her daughter, Sara, parallels some elements of Dalia's relationship with Amal. Dalia and Amal are strong mothers working hard for their children, a character that can be portrayed as a sign of strength and survival in the wake of devastation and loss (P,174). In Pennsylvania, with the death of her husband, Amal becomes an absentee mother, just like her predecessor Dalia, who did precisely the same thing.

The underlying reasons for the frozen blood of both mothers can be attributed to post-war trauma. Nevertheless, the mothers exhibit a distinct disengagement from their children due to

varying motivations. Dalia seeks to cultivate her daughter's qualities of patience and perseverance, thereby preparing her for acts of resistance. Conversely, Amal aims to facilitate her daughter's integration into American society, thereby opposing her daughter's involvement in Palestinian suffering. In contrast, Amal exhibits emotional detachment and actively avoids engaging in political activities due to apprehensions of experiencing a mental breakdown akin to that of her mother, Dalia. Moreover, Amal wants to shield her brother Yousef from the criminal charges brought against him by the FBI. There is a fear that their classified information may have leaked to the US government and may lead to trouble for her brother (p,234).

It is only after Sara learns about Palestine and is free from the threats of the FBI in her own country that Amal dares to share the truth about their relationship in front of Mr. Ari. After all, it is the elaborate nine-day dialogue that took place in Huda's kitchen pit in the midst of the 2002 carnage that successfully shifts the entire historical load upon Sara. This intense dialogue transforms the entire equation of a mother-daughter relationship into one marked by extraordinary love (p,233). In Jenin Sara experiences exposure to the extended family, she had been searching for all along. Once she finds work with the Al Jazeera News Agency, she sponsors her cousin Jacob to study at Temple University and convinces Mansour to follow them into America. Three people tied by painful memories of loss and hopes for renewal get together to form a new family unit.

While *Mornings in Jenin* does represent the politicized themes that naturally emerge in works that deal with the Palestinian national struggle and resistance, Abulhawa carves her distinction in painting the details of quotidian life in color within the refugee camp. Against the trope of the mother in Palestinian literature, often used as a metaphor for the nation or homeland, Abulhawa attempts to track the more mundane and irrelevant experiences of women. The feminine element, in particular, in this story closely relates to the exile experience of Abulhawa. In other words, in the novel , one experiences a diasporic difference between mother and child, which is certainly that space in which emotions of belonging and, at the same time, the deep pain of exile and separation are inscribed. Meanwhile, Cariello (2012) says the physical distance between the mothers and their children who live in other geographical locations does not merely represent exile but is also a site of meaning production. She has drawn a comparison between the female body, which gives birth to children and also produces written expression. Cariello also suggests this difference generated between mother and child creates a crisis that is constructive in the long run

as it allows the play of the boundaries at work in the act of writing. The physical separation reflected in women's writings, made poignantly real by the state of diaspora, underlines the anguish a disrupted motherhood creates. It is this, therefore, that allows for a base in creative literature. In this respect, Sara's resolution to dedicate herself to writing can be regarded as an attempt at implementing the immense possibilities contained within the diasporic environment, manifesting in Dalia, Amal, and Abulhawa.

Throughout many generations, women establish bonds that are strengthened by their collective experiences of being confined to traditional feminine roles and their encounters with traumatic events, "The bond we forged was molded from an unspoken commitment to our collective survival. It reached through history, straddled continents, spanned wars, and held our collective and individual tragedies and triumphs" (p. 165).

3.11 Motherhood and Intergenerational Trauma

Susan Abulhawa's work thus constitutes an important contribution towards an understanding of mother-daughter relations within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it uncovers how close familial relationships are patterned and imbued with larger political discourses. Drawing on The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism (1989), in which she discusses how women writers skillfully capture the complexity of maternal connections through the use of intimacy and estrangement, affection and aggression combined, Abulhawa's narratives are both deeply personal and of universal relevance. Her portrayal of these coalitions reveals the tricky balance between personal identity and the socio-political framework.

Indeed, Abulhawa's stories show that the mother-daughter relationship in a Palestinian context may be fallen, its core formed by memory, resilience, and cultural heritage passed from one to the other. In turn, these processes of valorization are constantly renegotiated, allowing the daughter to take active participation in forming her perspectives in dialogue or resistance against what her mother has to say.

The long-standing past events in Palestine and the way the interconnections are maintained between cultural heritage, displacement, and shared trauma go a long way in impacting the mother's generations according to societal norms. The liminality of paternal involvement enlarges the significance of mother-daughter relationships, especially for daughters. It is under difficult

conditions that an unsaid understanding becomes the major mode of communication, and the reminiscences shared allow a way of promoting toughness and conserving cultural practices in searing adversity and catastrophe. Through the gathered mother-daughter couples, Abulhawa pieces out the power plays and complex textures of familial relations, which survive and adapt under the pressure of history and the constantly shifting reality. This generates profound insights into the complex interrelationships between personal connections and society at large. Within the mother-daughter dynamics of Dalia-Amal and Amal-Sara in Mornings in Jenin, silence plays a significant role. It also serves as a means of communication between these moms and daughters, albeit the interpretations are comprehended only after many years

3.11.1 The Burdens of Maternal Influence

Dalia, as a mother, is characterized as being a stoic mother, "communicating the demands and tenderness of motherhood with the various tempers of silence" (p.52) . The relationship with her daughter is a case of "[m]atter-of-fact, efficient, tough" (p.57). While her brother Yousef, who has known their mother's more effusive disposition prior to the Nakba and exile, seems to have adjusted better to her reserve and coldness, Amal, never having known her mother in her former, more vital phase, is particularly resistant to this "silent disengagement" (p.52), attempting not to replicate the emotional detachment now branding their rapport.

The way in which Abulhawa tells the story of Amal's relationship with her parents epitomizes the difficulty in intergenerational communication at the fault lines of displacement and traumatic experience. The sharp contrast between her father's narration regarding their ancestral homeland and the pregnant silence of her mother brings into view a number of different strategies to cope with a shared tragedy. The father uses narrative sharing as a coping mechanism against grief, while the mother's silence is seen as emotional encapsulation, a typical response to trauma. The inability to talk creates a communication barrier between the mother and child, and this reflects the phenomenon of emotional cutoff, as described by many psychological theorists. As Amal tries to interpret her mother's silence itself as a form of communication, perhaps the most significant test there could be in bridging the generational divides through unspoken memories of sadness. The story that is told here encourages readers to reflect upon the deeper impact historical catastrophes have upon the structures of family units and, thus, upon interpersonal relationships and ways of communicating across generations. Abulhawa provides a detailed exposition of

gender-specific responses to displacement and the long-term effects of trauma on family relationships through varied parental responses, emphasizing the importance of understanding these coping strategies.

These adversities bring Dalia into silence and madness as a coping mechanism. After the loss of her son Ismael during the Nakba in 1948, she is faced with the fact of her new life as a refugee and silenced as a way of self-protection. Later, after the disappearance of her husband Hasan during the Naksa in 1967, she succumbs to insanity. Amal, innocent and spirited, has little ability to fully appreciate the intense depth of her mother's distress. However, on coming across Dalia in a state of great surprise, like a statue, hardly recognizable, in a relief camp following the termination of the Six-Day War, Amal, who thought it incomprehensible that her mother would be in this state, firmly insists on not recognizing her, stating to a relief worker, "I do not know her" (p.74).

Abulhawa's narrative shows us how the process of the slow construction of a bond between Amal and Dalia, her mother, takes place. Thus, it reveals the birthing act as a contradiction that takes death as a terminus of understanding. Through the guilt of abandonment in exile of her mother, she settles with the classic belief of survivor's guilt. The process is a long one, where she is remaking her mother's identity through the memories and stories, she overhears adults talk about and this is what illustrates a sociological concept called biographical reconstruction, which explains how people make things up about others after their death. In her realization, a feeling that her mother had left "long before" is underscored by the fact that her mother was physically present during the last moments of her life.

However, Dalia is also a caregiver, and in a midwife's play with her young daughter, she takes an interest in the smallest actions of the young woman. In turn, she has also become her caretaker, and she takes care of herself. Another mode of communication exists between this mother and daughter that surpasses the absence of spoken exchange. However, she always taught with her practicing medical and midwifery knowledge about it. Nobody argues that deep family bonds are mainly formed due to affection between family members manifesting itself in the exchange of thoughts and feelings. While Dalia seldom manifests her maternal love overtly, she imparts the essence of motherhood to Amal from an early age by instructing her in midwifery techniques, in a direct and uncomplicated way. This shows that even if they are not growing

together and if there are no obvious signs of emotion, they come closer through the biological connection between them. Dalia lets her daughter take an active role in her workplace with the idea that her daughter experiences becoming a parent. Dalia's choice to train Amal is a demonstration of her authority and leadership.

3.11.2 Repeating Patterns of Pain and Resilience

Although she is situated in a wholly different socio-cultural environment in the US, Amal's relationship with her daughter Sara replicates her relationship with her mother, Dalia. The concept of motherhood is largely marked by a lack of overt emotions and a restraint in emotional involvement. Dalia's well-known silence developed after the Nakba, while the more painful recollection in the case of Amal, exacerbated by the Shatila massacre, which had left her a widow, accounts for her own silence. The nightmare and bereavement of her motherland prepared Amal well for considering how appropriate it is to be a mother, fully embodying the distant care she once despised in her mother. The emotional disconnection is, however, hard for Sara to understand as she is from a different culture. It is an understanding of how the warmth is absent but not the reasons for that absence. The trauma of the Shatila massacre left Amal a widow and pushed her into motherhood 'with only a thread of will' (p,230); she confesses to keeping an emotional distance from the role of mother and just 'going through the mechanics of caring for a newborn' (p,229). Her care for her child was driven by duty, a sense of obligation that she felt she had to fulfill. While she did provide for her child, it was 'for the sake of duty' (p,230). Like her mom did after the Naksa, she painstakingly held herself back from going mad. So as not to go out of her mind, she wrapped herself in silence and emotional distance.

Amal ultimately had to abandon maternal affection and nurturing in pursuit of stability and the survival of the individual. Hedged in by an indescribable fear, Amal refused to make any physical contact with her daughter, worried that she would pass the horrible destiny she knew onto her. Identifying herself as "a woman with a small vocabulary who had no women to talk to," Amal referred to Sara as "a challenge to my steadfastness" as her daughter was trying to amplify the work of motherhood (p,246). While she deeply desired to demonstrate affection in a public space visually, Amal consciously kept a reserve of emotional distance toward her daughter, resulting in undefined reciprocation by Sara. Therefore, in truth, both Amal and Sara are exiled behind their indomitable barricades, "each wanting the love of the other" (p,246). As an American girl, Sara

feels attuned to her mother's frigidness yet is unsure what the root of her mother's detachment is. The relationship between Sara and her mother is quite strained as Amal performs her duty of being a mother with, for lack of another word, a robotic attitude instead of warmth, which would be ideal. Education achievement gets in the way of Sara, and she complains about the challenges she faces in accepting the history of their mother-daughter relationship. In one sense, Sara is growing up, becoming aware of the emotional distance that has existed between her and her mother, but she is also being affected by the long silences that were part of their relationship. As Sara increasingly aligns herself with her friends and distances herself from her mother's structured influence, Amal finds herself facing the repercussions of her own maternal shortcomings The essence of Amal's disposition toward motherhood consists in the premise that she willfully, yet inevitably, suppressed the depth of love she felt for both of them out of a monstrous notion of selflessness (p,255). As Sara ages and spends more time with friends, Amal meets the grim reality that her daughter is going out of her way to avoid the calm and orderly presence of her stubborn mother (p,258).

Amal gives the impression that she understands her mother's suffering in what was an equally painful circumstance when Amal asks for a better mother who might, with pride, share what she made as a craft at school on Mother's Day (p,67). Neither Amal nor Sara would understand the complex reasons their mother was the cold and distant woman they often wondered about until David who was Ismael, the long-lost twin brother of Amal came to visit to spend time with Sara's mother. Knowing what Sara's mother experienced as a woman living as an illegitimate child and was born out of wedlock, which was illegal, appeared as an explanation for Sara's mother's distance on a previous visit to Jenin.

Finally, during Abulhawa's final visit to Jenin, she facilitates, through a maternal moment, the transference of the first stories about herself that her mother never shared with her daughter, Sara. The maternal experience fosters this significant transfer of maternal knowledge as she introduces us to Amal and Sara. It marks the moment when an extended period of silence in a maternal relationship gives way to more speaking terms and warmer bonds. It brings new life to the maternal domain. Then she dies under an Israeli soldier's bullet, just as Amal had come to free her heart of the anger and neglect. However, Sara learns many truths about her mother. Occurring against the backdrop of Palestine, this reconciliation allows Mother and daughter to rise above

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their misinterpretations. Therefore, returning symbolically here in the land of Palestine also represents a much deeper journey back into becoming what we are or should have been embraced by the mother.

Amal is deeply influenced, even if unknowingly, by Dalia's role as a midwife. In adulthood, Amal halfheartedly studies to become a doctor and is haunted by memories of her mother when she assists in childbirth. Before Amal and her fellow doctor Majid get married, she uses her midwifery skills to manually adjust the fetal position of an unborn child in a woman's uterus, avoiding complications or the need for an emergency. As Majid extends his congratulations on the delivery, Amal recalls a pregnant woman who used to ask after another pregnant woman, beneath the shade of that tree, exactly six years before now- and then she thinks of something entirely different, which is far removed from childbirth. This resembles Virginia Woolf's claim that "We look back to our mothers if we are women" (p.82). Amal realizes that Dalia was not just a woman but, most importantly, a mother who very much wanted to be there. As Amal grows more into womanhood and becomes a mother herself, she unexpectedly revisits the tenuous bond she shared with her mother.

The relationship between mothers and daughters has a special tone in Palestine. A girl's mother's identity is, therefore, an important variable that defines both their individual and collective identity. From a young age, the mother acts as the conduit through which both the family and society interact with the daughter. Mothers help their daughters to be proud to be Palestinian, teach them their Arabic origins, and pass their traditions and customs to their daughters so as to be reserved for the next generations; they help them to build their identities or truly said to be really a Palestinian with the hope of return. This can be seen in the relationship between Dalia and her daughter Amal, even though Amal, an adult who is spending time in a gap year to pursue a medical career, automatically reflects on her mother every time she attends today's childbirth. Amal demonstrates her skill in midwifery by repositioning the fetus in a pregnant woman's womb, possibly preventing complicated births or surgery, a cesarean section. Although Majid tells Amal how competent she is at childbirth, her thoughts wander inward with memories of her deceased mother, who transferred this skill to her years ago.

3.11.3 Sarah's Relationship with Palestine and Constructing Identity

Mornings in Jenin focuses on the concept of returning to Palestine rather than Sara's own experience. While Sara's life in America before her trip to Palestine is only briefly mentioned, Amal, despite her emotional detachment, manages to share some aspects of Palestinian culture with her, such as the traditional dish makloubeh. In Palestine, where Amal finally feels at ease, she tells different incidents from her background, including her alleged participation in Yousef's 1983 attack on a US consul, as well as other memories from her youth in Jenin.

Parents transmit this cultural heritage to Palestinians born in the diaspora. The majority of Palestinians attribute their Palestinian identity to the significant role played by their parents and family members. The attachment to Palestine among Palestinians born in the diaspora is rooted in the process of acquiring knowledge, transmitting and reconstructing memories, pictures, and history and this is what Amal does to her daughter in her last days in Palestine. Although Palestinian youth need to apprehend their Palestinian history, Amal's go back to Palestine changed into an essential adventure of self-discovery, enabling her and Sarah to look at the essence of 'Palestinians' through their journeys to Palestine. Relationships turn into aware alternatives rather than formal elements inherited from mother and father. The narrative shifts from Amal to Sarah as the principal individual in Mornings in Jenin after Amal's tragic death suggests Sarah's progress in shaping her narrative of Palestinian identification, which determines the background of this part of her.

Finally, Sarah clearly asserts her Palestinian identity in her own words. Departing from Palestine in search of self-discovery and a deep-seated desire to connect with her family roots, Sarah's Palestinian experience contrasts with her mother's. She predominantly resides in Jenin with her mother and perhaps feels a sense of belonging to Palestine. The trajectory of her journey takes various forms and reflects her personal understanding of her Palestinian identity.

Furthermore, Sara transcends her attachment to Palestine, which her dad and mom have shaped. After Amal is fatally shot by means of an Israeli sniper, who mistakenly catches a bullet aimed toward Sara, the narrator reverses the factor of view, and the very last segment of the narrative is recounted from Sara's factor of view. Following her mom's death, Sara remained in Palestine for a prolonged duration, employed by using an NGO in Jenin and taking visits to Ein Hod with Ari Perlstein, Sara's grandfather's Jewish acquaintance. Ultimately, Sara is forcibly expelled from Palestine, in part due to the blog in which she corresponds together with her mother:

Do you know, Mother, that Haj Salem was buried alive in his home? Does he tell you stories in heaven now? I wish I had had a chance to meet him. To see his toothless grin and touch his leathery skin. To beg him, as you did in your youth, for a story from our Palestine. He was over one hundred years old, Mother. To have lived so long, only to be crushed to death by a bulldozer. Is this what it means to be Palestinian?…They murdered you and buried you in their headlines, Mother. How do I forgive, Mother? How does Jenin forget? How does one carry this burden? How does one live in a world that turns away from such injustice for so long? Is this what it means to be Palestinian, Mother? (p.314-317)

Both of these extracts exemplify Sara's currently received recognition of the essence of Palestinian identity. it is clear that Sara has now adopted the Palestinian identity. Kai Erikson has determined that even as traumatic activities might weaken social guide systems, the ones who have been traumatized tend to be attracted to those who have undergone similar expierience. This ends in the formation of a traumatized community wherein trauma serves as the 'basis for communality' (p.198)

Therefore, Sara has transcended her unique role in a potential 'lost generation', inherited her mother's trauma, and developed into the primary generation to go through a stressful event. However, Sara's weblog mediates a narrative about Palestine that evokes empathy from Palestinians and people worldwide and can stimulate the formation of prosthetic memories.

Sara's narratives extend the mere experience of being Palestinian: born and raised in the United States to a mother who spent her early years in exile, Sara's story is a universal one. Mornings in Jenin not only reflects the current situation of many Palestinians but also sheds light on the universal patterns of migration and their impact on identity.

Mornings in Jenin is the least simply distinguishable. Abulhawa has written Palestinian narratives that focus on Palestinian ancestral and countrywide histories and the difficulties of keeping Palestinian identity even as in exile. But she also gives narratives of constructing an experience of belonging in the space in between places. Mornings in Jenin mainly explores the idea of home and belonging namely Palestine. All generations of the Abulheja family presented in the story ultimately discover as Palestinian and trust Palestine to be their place of birth. Sara's

weblog illustrates that her suffering upon returning to Palestine serves to enhance her connection to the country and enhance her feeling of Palestinian identity.

Through her complex cultural identification and belonging, Abulhawa's depiction of Sara in *Mornings in Jenin* demanding situations oversimplified perceptions of rootlessness usually related to expatriate stories. Although Sara may be a perpetual expatriate, her affiliations with both Palestine and America show a multifaceted "transnational identity" characterized by way of the renovation of enormous relationships throughout many cultural settings. Her attraction for specific settings indicates that large relationships can be hooked up with many areas at the same time. The position of Sara exemplifies the by the tension of an individual's identity that is shaped by the combination of cultural heritage from ancient times and the distress caused by displacement. Through its depiction of a flexible cultural identity that permits many associations and allegiances, this representation of a "hybrid identity" challenges rigid concepts of belonging.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed some complex aspects of Palestinian literature, especially from the perspective of *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa, underlining its movement from early poetry to modern diasporic political fiction. Through the use of poetic heritage, the rise of prose, and major works by women writers in Palestine, one has seen how some traditions have influenced others in their expression of Palestinian identities and resistances. It is in this sense that Abulhawa can use the English language - the language of resistance - and at the same time challenge dominant colonial narratives by celebrating the power of storytelling for Palestinian resilience.

This novel weaves together the historical and psychic dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict necessary to grasp the characters' battles with identity and intergenerational trauma that persist into the postcolonial era. The novel explores the road of complex self-discovery taken by the protagonist, Amal, whose emergent identity is formed via memory and displacement, along with a surging quest for self-realization.

This chapter has further elaborated on how the novel interrogates colonial and hegemonic narratives, in particular, from a postcolonial perspective, which emphasizes hybridity, representation of the "Other," and the experience of living a double reality. From that perspective,

the novel enriches the Palestinian experience, moving beyond reductive narratives of victimhood into the resilience and fortitude of its characters.

In conclusion, *Mornings in Jenin* is about the ways female characters Dalia, Amal, and Sarah navigate life in light of oppression, trauma, and resilience. The significant representations of feminine strength and resistance, especially with regard to patriarchal dominance, explain how the women in this novel establish their identities through acts of rebellion, memory, and the revival of maternal power. A deeper theme of intergenerational trauma then arises, in which the motherhood factor becomes crucial in both continued trauma and healing, underlining female resilience as of essential importance within Palestinian narratives. This chapter is complexly interwoven through interconnected themes that show *Mornings in Jenin* to be a deep narrative about both individual and collective defiance; it offers a profound analysis of colonialism while looking into the intricate process of identity formation, in particular within the Palestinian diaspora.

Chapter Four:

Identity, Self-Awareness, and Empowerment in *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will juxtapose two novels, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru,* into a discussion over identity and resistance across a wide range of socio-political contexts. Both works depict the struggle that women face with cultural expectations, patriarchal rules, colonialism, and war. Abulhawa and Nwapa bear witness against hegemonic discourse and give voice to muted ones, especially to women whose lives, marked by displacement, loss, and self-discovery, really signal resistance and self-realization.

Mornings in Jenin is a generations-long narrative about the pain of displacement of a Palestinian family, with its strong women bearing up under the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On the contrary, *Efuru* is a novel of self-discovery in the case of one Nigerian woman who was against colonial pressures and gender standards. Each of these novels illustrates how personal and collective struggles of agency and survival create women's identities via contrasting cultural inheritance and gendered expectations. The present analysis, therefore, deals with the themes of feminine identity, cultural persistence, and resistance, as revealed in both books, focusing on the self-realization of the characters. This chapter, therefore, looks at such novels for an illustration of how Abulhawa and Nwapa use narrative to underline the influence of women's voices on personal and national identities.

4.2 Identity Struggle within Postcolonial Context

 Efuru, written by Flora Nwapa and published in 1966, is a landmark novel in postcolonial studies, mostly about Nigerian society. The story tends to be one of the milestones in leading the first ever major work in English from a Nigerian woman, which presents a reflective argument on femininity through the postcolonial perspective. Through the character of Efuru, Nwapa looks into concerns of autonomy and identity relative to women. She introduces a protagonist who is intelligent and independent, ready to take on traditional gender norms that exist in society. The choices Efuru makes in her life-her decision to elope with her spouse instead of following the conventional practices, for example ,are indicative of one who strongly desires self-determination. The act is a rebellion against patriarchal norms; hence, Efuru is a source of empowerment. She stands for postcolonial feminism and furthers the course of women's agency beyond the circumscribing hold of societal convention.

 Efuru is a somewhat complicated character in the realms of female autonomy and identity. In her Igbo society, she is articulated as intelligent, beautiful, and capable of taking care of herself in a setting where such feminine attributes are considered abhorrent. It is evident from the story that she is quite capable of making vital decisions, such as eloping with her husband without conforming to societal expectations along the way, which further affirms her as independent. Female empowerment becomes Efuru's most salient performance in the guise of disobedience against the patriarchal world. This act signifies much larger concepts in postcolonial feminism such as women's agency and self-identification beyond societal expectations.

 The novel also narrates the ambivalence associated with womanhood in the framework of post-colonial society. Though Efuru is strong and full of life, she struggles to break out of the restrictions and expectations set upon her by the strongly patriarchal society. The novel provides a good example of how women can be both empowered and oppressed, thereby illuminating the fundamental contradictions present within their identities. By placing great emphasis on Efuru's struggles against sexism and the binding expectations society has placed on her, Nwapa critiqued these societal norms.

 Nwapa develops Efuru mainly through Igbo customs and concepts based on motherhood and gender. The heroine portrays a struggle between traditional and modern aspirations. These events also show how modern women navigate and keep their identities alive. With Efuru's

journey, Nwapa does indeed call for a reevaluation of women's roles as depicted in literature and culture by questioning the male-dominated narratives of earlier African literature.

Efuru is a powerful indictment of gender dynamics in the postcolonial setup, and it epitomizes the struggles and achievements that women experience in a society in transition. The representation of Efuru by Nwapa points not only to the question of female identity but also serves as an appeal for the inclusion of voices by women in the postcolonial debate. This novel remains an important document for those interested in understanding the various ways in which gender, culture, and the legacies of colonialism come together in African literature.

On the other side, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* offers a profound exploration of the Palestinian experience through a postcolonial lens, addressing themes of displacement, identity, and memory against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The narrative follows the Abulheja family over generations, illustrating their struggles and resilience as they navigate the complexities of life in a refugee camp after being forcibly removed from their ancestral home.

The notion of unhomeliness, as elucidated by Homi Bhabha, retains an important sense of what the protagonists go through in *Mornings in Jenin*. The Abulheja family personifies this dislocation because they feel misplaced not only in their physical home but also in terms of their cultural identity. In this representation, they are depicted living in a condition of liminality, with sameness in straddling several identities and homes. It is a mirror of the greater Palestinian experience of exile, in addition to being the psychological consequence of living in the diaspora, where the notion of home becomes fluid and mostly disagreeable.

Memory is another important aspect of the formation of the characters' identities. The author Abulhawa places much emphasis on how memories of their homeland are, in a kind of way, a resistance to erasure. These memories of olive orchards, communal gatherings, and familial relations that the family owns have now become very crucial in knowing who they are amidst constant suffering. This is in line with how Edward Said talks about being "between worlds," where people organize their identities as an interaction of the past and the present, asserting their presence against colonial narratives which would claim to describe them.

This novel also portrays that their culture is a source of strength; thus, it depicts the meaning of cultural heritage. A connection with their land and to the customs preserved by the

Abulheja family seems naturally to form the very basis for identity. Despite being away, they nevertheless lead attached lives to the cultural practices and community values that anchor their turmoil-filled lives. This is an appeal to cultural continuity that testifies to the postcolonial thoughts proclaiming recovery and glorification of Indigenous identities amidst persecution by the colonial powers.

The two novels symbolize the societies in which the effects of colonialism and its associated practices have adversely affected the way of life. For example, both the Igbo in Efuru and the Palestinians in Abulhidja are immensely familiar with the concept of colonization and the associated problems that come along as a result of it. Even though the British colonized the Igbo of Efuru, the effects of their actions, at least on the political and socioeconomic levels, happen on a metaphorically small scale. However, within the context of Mornings in Jenin, the very foundation and structure of familial and societal frameworks are strongly and powerfully changed as a function of the forces of colonialism, as well as the subsequent critique that it receives. More importantly, there is also a deep sense of cultural dislocation in the protagonists of both novels, subconscious and very much an identity crisis. "My father's kingdom was here, so where is mine?" says Amal poignantly to suggest that she is merely an exile whose legitimate claim to the rights of Palestine has been usurped by others unfairly. The contributors relate the psychological implications resulting from colonization through appropriate methodology, showing an in-depth understanding of their work.

Drawing heavily from the cultural identity that shapes individual and collective experiences, legacies, traditions, and languages become the anchoring pillars to establish selfhood, as well as communal relationships in both Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru.* The two novels intimate that cultural identity is both a personal attribute and a social feature governing how communities orient towards the world and read their positioning in this world. Both works put a premium on the role literature plays in maintaining and articulating cultural identity, especially when faced with an external agency which conspires to eradicate or peripheralize that identity. Through storytelling, language, and cultural symbols, the authors construct personal and collective identities, but simultaneously, they struggle against and resist dominant discourses that seek homogenization or discredit diverse praxis of culture.

Both novels explore the complexities of identity formation and resistance within specific cultural and historical contexts. They both analyze literary works that engage with broader social and political issues, highlighting the power of storytelling to challenge dominant narratives and amplify marginalized voices. Set in a traditional Igbo society, Efuru's identity and choices are largely influenced by cultural expectations, especially around marriage, motherhood, and spirituality. Efuru faces pressure to conform to her role as a wife and mother, yet her choices frequently defy traditional norms.

On the other hand, Amal's Palestinian heritage shapes her identity from childhood. Growing up amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she faces expectations rooted in survival and resistance. Her journey is one of grappling with her identity as a Palestinian in exile, impacting her personal and familial connections.

The two novels, *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa explore the ongoing ramifications of colonialism on countries and individuals. They also review at length the ways in which colonial forces have reconstructed social hierarchies, economic structures, and cultural dynamics in both novels.

The critical relevance of both works engages, through separate narratives, the transformation of traditional cultures wrought by colonialism, along with the socioeconomic obstacles, cultural erasures, and complex people's responses that colonization of such a shift would entail. These books shed light on the hierarchies thus established and the exploitative economic models used to marginalize indigenous or local forms of authority. This, in turn, necessitated resistance, both overt and covert, on the part of the colonized peoples.

In *Efuru,* Nwapa contextualizes how British colonization affected Nigerian society with respect to Igbo gender roles and the social expectations placed upon women. The work of Nwapa, with the figure of Efuru, has taken cognizance of investigations into the cultural displacements produced by the intertwining of colonialist ideology with pre-existent social systems. By situating Efuru's negotiation of autonomy within these limits, Nwapa brings into view the divided character of colonial oppression, especially in its impact on women, and the pathways for agency inscribed by women despite such limitations. She represents, in negotiating the dictates of the community, the struggle for self-determination amidst a colonial background that always seems to marginalize indigenous identity. In this respect, Efuru illustrates that as people struggle for self-determination,

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there is always a restrictive overlay of colonial influence. The novel construes an elaborate, multilayered understanding of individual agency in a society touched by colonialism and subtly critiques the way in which colonialism distorts traditional gender roles and cultural practices.

Equally, *Mornings in Jenin* reflects the Palestinian experience of living under Israeli occupation as part of the worldwide sociopolitical reverberations of colonialism. The novel that Abulhawa has authored deals with population displacement, the disintegration of family relationships, and the erosion of cultural traditions that the Palestinian people have to put up with. Abulhawa offers an efficient accounting of the trauma and resiliency inherent in the struggles for identity and sovereignty undertaken by the Palestinian people through following the lives of multiple generations within the Abulheja family. Abulhawa exposes the psychological and social cost of colonial control through the portrayal of dispossession as further manifestations of colonial legacies materializing in the forms of economic hardship, political marginalization, and social destabilization. The intergenerational breadth she uses in this novel completely expresses how displacement and legacies of colonialism seep into structures of family and human identities. This serves to underscore a continued pursuit of cultural and national identity in the face of structural oppression.

Consequently, both *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru* are replete with valuable insights into the ways in which literature has served as a conduit for the significant impacts that colonialism has had on the socialized consciousness and individuality of colonized communities. Using these narratives, Nwapa and Abulhawa highlight the problems of colonial legacies. The authors will go on to mention how, though quite disempowering, colonialism acts to inspire its victims into resistance, adaptation, and the building of other spaces wherein they can define themselves. Through their emphases on the resiliency of the individual and the innumerable techniques of defiance used within such transformed social settings, both novels strongly underline the struggle for cultural survival and agency in a postcolonial society.

The major protagonists of Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal, and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, *Efuru,* depict various forms of resistance that include both internalized experiences as well as responses to outside forces. In *Efuru*, Nwapa develops a protagonist whose defiance is more subtle and yet grounded in resistance and the freedom to choose. For instance, attached to the patriarchal structures of marriage, motherhood, and female career, Efuru still manages to rebel by

appreciating her entrepreneurial independence, opting for nonconventional marriages and raising children or not, as per her personal beliefs. While feminists of her type do not seek political engagement, her engagement is underscored in the decisions she makes in the traditional Igbo societal structure, which tends to limit an individual's freedom and, in this case, is a matter of self-assertion. There is a quiet power in Efuru's assertion of self as a woman, which in patriarchal polities like hers reveals the ability of women to take the reins of their own lives.

Efuru's claim to independence is characterised by her decision to take things into her own hands in the marriage arrangements, as shown by her declaration, "'I shall settle it myself'". Efuru's actions defy existing assumptions, prompting inquiries about the underlying authorial voice expressed through the character. This action is an intelligent attempt to increase awareness, with the goal of questioning existing standards and encouraging individual autonomy and self-governance. Subsequently, Efuru delays the payment of the bride price until a later stage in life, when the couple has acquired sufficient resources to sustain themselves. This action solidifies her position as someone who is capable of adhering to societal expectations in a manner that aligns with her own values and objectives. Efuru acts in defiance of established customs and gestures in the direction of longing for independence and self-empowerment,"Efuru was her name. She was a remarkable woman. It was not only that she came from a distinguished family. She has distinguished herself. Her husband was not known and people wondered why she married him" (p. 7)

Efuru, also, resolves to trade in the urban centre rather than practicing agriculture with her husband, Adizua. This is a clear indication of independence and strong will; as she puts it clearly, "If you will, you can go to the farm." A farm job is not suited to my ability." I am going to trade (p.10). The decision by Efuru to stay back on her personal path instead of accompanying her husband to the farm is condemned by the community, a fact that reveals that there is tension between conventional gender roles and changing ideas about individual autonomy.

Efuru's self-concept and identity are very influential in shaping her actions. As a trading lady, she focuses on her own business activity. This decision drew unwarranted criticism from her mother-in-law, Ajanupu, and even from her father, urging her to live like other women. Efuru, however, is always self-conscious and determined to stand up for herself against the ill treatment from her husband. That was possible because she had a strong concept of self that helped her

withstand the forces that threatened to railroad her into continuing in a degrading situation. Thus, going against all advice from her elders to endure the marriage and persuade her husband, Efuru acted in an empowered manner, moving out of her husband's household and ensuring that she did not live with less dignity.

Efuru in her culture is viewed her as worthless simply because she couldn't have children, a fact that was beyond her control. She had given birth before, but unfortunately, her child developed some illness , her feeling of satisfaction is threatened "If she dies, that will mean the end of me"（p. 66）.The illustration depicts a developing Efuru who is still struggling with her identity. However, the loss of her kid and the sorrow that comes with it do not turn her to a non-person, nor do the failures of her two marriages. She maintains her business and establishes herself as a serious and successful businesswoman. Furthermore, although still married to her second husband, she becomes a dedicated worshipper of the woman of the lake. Thus, even while still married, her other responsibilities minimized her sexual one, leading her in new paths for self-realization.

As the story develops, Efuru meets more and more challenges; however, she faces them all with a strong heart. First, she loses her husband, who marries another woman. Then, after a year, she loses her beloved daughter. Her life becomes terrible, but she is supported by her mother-in-law. She has had her own space in the house. She is not alienated from her relatives. Efuru begins to develop a new sense of self-importance. After realizing Adizua's unfaithfulness, she displays her newfound strength by leaving him. Nwapa demonstrates to readers that embracing transitory insaneness contributes to the development of stronger identities and greater awareness of its transient nature. The author argues that while Efuru's ability to move freely allows her to develop her own identity, it also requires her to separate from the oppressive reality of colonial and patriarchal society. She says, "Efuru is not shocked. She is brave in any situation. Her willpower enables her to rise firmly despite her husband's elopement and the loss of her daughter; she remains the same independent woman. (p.196-197)

Despite the societal pressure riding on her to be traditional and go back to her husband, Efuru feels these expectations are betrayals that will bring about her ultimate death. She feels these propositions as threats to her freedom and survival, for she realizes the power of personal devastation that would result if she were to yield to pressures and give up her own will. This,

therefore, is a kind of revolt against society, which shows Efuru's strength and will in forging her path through significant resistance. The reader may notice that it is explicitly stated that in order to maintain her independence, Efuru's persona must stay alone, detached from her social and cultural environment.

Nwapa emphasizes the progression of Efuru's character towards autonomy as she embarks on a journey guided by the woman of the lake, a path designed to defy patriarchal subjugation and the lack of personal growth. Through Efuru's choice to follow the woman of the lake, Nwapa suggests that she has chosen a path leading to certain independence. For Nwapa, being in this state of disconnection is a decision that keeps Efuru away from this "destiny".

Nwapa depicts Efuru as a lady who possesses the ability to rise above limitations and achieve a higher state, while nevertheless maintaining a strong connection to her origins. These portrayals indicate that Efuru's transcendence is marked by detachment, exemplifying an extreme form of being that arises from the effects of colonialism and patriarchal subjugation. The move from co-dependence to transcendence represents advancement, but in the novel, this type of transcendence is shown not as an ultimate goal, but rather as a temporary phase that fosters further growth in the building of one's identity and achieving self-realization. Efuru's final acceptance as a follower of the barren deity Uhamiri comes after a number of attempts to manipulate a compromised existence within a traditional setting. The behaviours of the characters allude to a sense of understanding indicative of a relationship relating to contemporary experience and tradition

In *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa succeeds in representing the various realities of women in Igbo society, bringing out the important role that culture has played in influencing the formation of a woman's identity. Besides other examples, it is the character of Efuru that gives an intense portrait of how societal expectations about identity can be a source of pain in forming one's personal identity.

Flora Nwapa has succeeded in portraying the character and tracking the stages of her life and her in her psychological and intellectual development. Efuru evolves from a naive little girl to a strong, wise woman. This is reflected in her manner, decisions, and interactions, which are highly definitive of growth, especially in all areas of her life. That role shifts her not just as a woman but also in her ways as a mother and wife, learning afresh what it means to be such with fresher wisdom

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and insight. She functions as a reformer by basing her decisions on her own objectives while going against the rules and traditions of her community. The distinctive characteristics of the protagonist possesses a distinct nature that is clearly visible in the perception of her community. Alongside her role as a reformer, Efuru's uniqueness was also exemplified by her virtuous, generous, friendly, and charming nature.

In contrast, Amal, in Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, experiences and performs a more explicit political opposition, drawing on her experiences as a Palestinian woman living under occupation and in exile. Amal's existence is characterized by the tribulations of war, displacement and the struggle towards understanding Palestinian identity. Her battle is people-specific and transcends personal choices; it cuts across the Palestinian struggle against exile and oppression. Turning loss, abandonment, and geopolitics into resistance, the latter is transformed into a form of struggle that personalizes the dilemma of the Palestinians even in history. While the defiance in Efuru's character is internalized and self-referential, Amal's resistance has a particular sociopolitical content that renders that journey both personal and political.

Amal's identity in *Mornings in Jenin* undergoes a profound evolution, driven by her experiences of displacement, generational trauma, and an unending quest for belonging. Her journey embodies the complex, often painful interplay between personal identity and national heritage, rooted deeply in her Palestinian background and complicated by a life spent in exile. Amal's identity is not a fixed concept but rather a fluid construct shaped by the stories of her family, the tragedy of the Nakba, and the ongoing Palestinian struggle.

From a young age, Amal absorbs the profound pain and resilience of her people. Her grandfather Yehya's tales and her father Hasan's memories serve as her introduction to a homeland that she has never fully experienced but that lives vibrantly in her imagination. The memories of the olive groves, family gatherings, and Jenin's landscapes paint a picture of a world that was forcibly lost. This generational inheritance of loss and love for Palestine gives Amal a sense of identity that is as much a part of her as her own memories. However, growing up in the harsh realities of a refugee camp brings her face to face with the brutal outcomes of war and displacement, shaping her into someone both intensely proud of her heritage and deeply scarred by the trauma associated with it.

At the beginning of the novel, Amal is introduced as a small girl born and raised in a refugee camp in the city of Jenin. From an early age, her life is filled with the nuances of her Palestinian culture, thanks to her father's tales about their homeland. There is, however, a heartbreaking desire for it deep within her, it is from within the boundaries of Palestinian culture and the family narratives about Palestine that the first self in her has also emerged despite her never having set foot on that land. While Amal matures physically, her identity also grows but remains torn and shattered because of the terrible experience of her family's displacement. The feeling of being uprooted enhances when one is also deprived of their home and has to go through violence.

Amal's later relocation to the United States introduces a new layer of complexity to her identity crisis. Living in a culture where her Palestinian background is misunderstood or dismissed, Amal grapples with feelings of alienation and cultural dislocation. The sense of 'otherness' she encounters amplifies her internal conflict. In America, she experiences moments of freedom and stability previously unavailable to her, yet these moments are shadowed by a persistent ache for her homeland and family. As she attempts to navigate between two worlds, Amal feels neither fully Palestinian nor fully American, embodying the double consciousness of a person who belongs to both places and yet feels rooted in neither. Amal's experience of living in the United States adds to the complexity of her already strained sense of self. She is also subjected to a sense of inadequacy and displacement, something that motivates her to take on the name "Amy" in order to avoid the pain of her past as well as willingly assimilate herself in to the American culture. This shift is a significant change from the Palestinian self in that she tries to erase every single fragment of her past that ties her to the culture, in a bid to incorporate herself into the new culture.

As soon as she gets there, Amal comes up against the layered and often brutal reality of day-to-day living in Jenin, which is both an image of the resilience and suffering of the Palestinian People. The continuous political and social strife that comes with dislocation and occupation, and the problems of those who survive within, offer her a new understanding of what identity means, one that is far beyond subjectivity. These interactions compel Amal to engage with the difficult, multifactorial aspects of her identity as a Palestinian and as an exile, enjoying the perks of American life while at the same time remembering the past and present struggles of her homeland. Hence, her willingness to go back becomes a significant learning process for her as it increases her understanding of others, deepens her ties to her ethnic roots and forces her to adapt to a

heterogeneous society, disregarding her present life but acknowledging her people's past. At this point, she starts to demonstrate a form of cultural resistance that involves engaging with her history, even as she is navigating the larger diaspora story that many Palestinians face around the world.

Her return to Palestine represents a very pivotal and contemplative stage in her still-emerging identity and cultural allegiance. After personal tragedies and frustration with the restrictive nature of the identity created within an American context, great need compelled her to reconnect with her heritage, following the roots that have conventionally identified her yet had felt so distant. Going home is a physical and symbolic journey that puts her on the path of reclaiming her Palestinian identity once more, but also to understanding her lineage and the suffering that has been generational throughout her family.

In this place, Amal encounters the intricate and frequently severe reality of life in Jenin, a place that ultimately has come to represent the resistance and torture of the Palestinian populace. The continuous political and social conflicts, characterized by displacement, occupation, and the resilience of those who persevere, create for her an understanding of identity that is larger than personal experience. Such interactions tempt Amal to begin reconsidering her complex, multilayered identity as both a Palestinian and an exile between the comforts of her American life and the tales of history and ongoing struggles of her homeland. Her homecoming becomes, therefore, a very important process of learning that increases her empathetic sense, strengthens her ties with the cultural background, and challenges her to lead a double life, respecting the life she is living and the ancestors that lived before her. She starts, through this, to embody a form of cultural resilience, one that both acknowledges obligations to the past and presses onward into the greater diasporic reality shared by so many Palestinians around the world.

Her relationships underscore this identity crisis, particularly her bonds with her family and her struggle to find intimacy with others. The separation from her brother Yousef and the loss of her mother Dalia remains raw, constant reminders of the price her family has paid and the gaps in her life that cannot be filled. In her romantic relationships, Amal struggles to reconcile her painful past with her desire for stability and acceptance, reflecting her broader struggle to integrate her Palestinian identity into a life that has, in many ways, been forcibly reshaped by exile.

Amal's identity journey ultimately illustrates a process of rediscovery and reconciliation. Her return to Palestine later in the novel serves as a liberating moment, a chance to reconnect with her heritage on her own terms. Yet, even as she embraces her roots, her life in exile has left an indelible mark on her sense of self, making her story one of duality and resilience.

Through Amal, Mornings in Jenin presents a deeply human exploration of the impact of displacement on identity, revealing how the personal and the political converge to shape an individual's sense of self across generations and borders. By the end of the novel, Amal has broken into this identification with complete acceptance of her past and present. She finds a way to balance her life's conflicting features: her Palestinian descent and the effect her international exposure has had on her life. It is in finding this reconciliation that Amal is finally able to develop a more nuanced sense of self that incorporates the joy and sorrow that have taken residence in her life. She rises above her troubles, and that makes resilience her hallmark.

Amal's identity changes toward embracing her past and present . She discovers how to reconcile the conflicting aspects of her life by accepting her Palestinian ancestry and recognizing the influence of her international experiences. Through this reconciliation, Amal is able to gain a more complex self-image that takes into account both the happiness and the sadness she has experienced throughout her life. Her ability to bounce back from adversity and turn it into strength makes her resilience a defining characteristic.

While Abulhawa's attention turns to the Palestinian identity and how the legacies of colonialism create trauma and displacement intergenerationally within the Palestinian diaspora, Nwapa explores how colonialism has ruptured the traditional forms of culture in Nigeria through the protagonist, Efuru and the Igbo community that surrounds her. Nwapa's depiction of the traditions of the Igbo people, their spirituality, and their sense of community testifies to the resilience of those aspects of culture against the invading forces of Western colonization, which more often than not belittled Indigenous identities and those assigned to gender. On the other hand, Abulhawa foregrounds, the way that language, storytelling, and cultural memory form resilient forces against the erasure of Palestinian identity in resistance to the colonial narratives which threaten to occlude Palestinian histories.

Both *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa and *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa can be seen as evocative of profound reflections on the framing of individual and collective experiences through

one's cultural identity within a postcolonial framework that underlines the legacies of colonial histories. Cultural heritage, tradition, and language are discussed in these novels as indispensable constituent elements toward defining identity and interfacing with the world, most especially in those postcolonial societies in which the echoes of displacement, erasure, and marginalization still reverberate.

Placing their works within the postcolonial context, Abulhawa and Nwapa transcended merely writing for appreciation to using literature as a means of preserving and propagating a cultural identity molded by colonial processes. They employed the narrative technique, the language, and the visual arts in the representation of their characters' and subjects' ethnicity and races as well as in contesting the ruling colonial discourses, which usually suppress or distort them. In both novels, storytelling became an act of postcolonial resistance in which reclaiming language and tradition empowered the character to resist and redefine imposed identities. Abulhawa and Nwapa show, therefore, how literature not only allows conserving cultural identity but also serves as a strong method of resistance against cultural imperialism, which permits their characters to regain agency and autonomy over their narratives.

To view these works as merely postcolonial narratives would be limiting; Mornings in Jenin and Efuru relate to the much bigger discourse of cultural endurance and the role literature is able to take in history twisted by imperialism and colonialism. These texts underpin that in colonial societies, literature is not just an art; it is a tool and a weapon for healing the ever-sickening culture and history of many peoples.

Although set within distinct geographical and historical contexts, *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru* do share some powerful similarities in their explanations of female identity, cultural resilience, and the impact of external forces on traditional societies. By placing the experiences of women at the center, both novels offer valuable lessons on how to deal with the many complications of negotiating societal expectations, challenging patriarchal norms, and finding one's agency amidst shifting cultural landscapes.

4.3 Gender Complexities

The concept of 'women's empowerment' has gained traction in development circles over the past few decades. It sees the empowerment of women as a valuable end in and of itself, as well

as a goal for transformation in enabling and supporting people and societies to meet human development needs. It is of particular interest in oppressive environments such as those that are patriarchal and colonial. Patriarchy is systemic, originating from how both 'gender identities' and 'gendered roles' are constructed, which in turn dictate 'gender-appropriate behaviour'. This interplay of gendered identities and roles restricts women from exercising certain rights while also operating to make women and men see their situation in certain ways. Thus, efforts at gender equality can only take on a transformative quality when they work to expose patriarchal power relations, as well as challenge them. Moreover, our reading of a number of texts convinces us that the processes of colonialism have formed gender identity in colonized people, and when we take the trouble to look at the various depictions of perceived roles of men and women from colonized countries, we find that women have suffered particularly harsh treatment.

In the case of *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, the road to emancipation has to be one of deep understanding of historical consciousness that contrasts sharply with or dares differ from the colonial or patriarchal measure.

In *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa subtly criticizes patriarchal conventions deeply embedded in the traditional Igbo society by using the life choices of the protagonist, Efuru, to counter traditional and established gender expectations and to foreground female agency. Efuru's choices of a partner challenge the cultural conceptions of marriage. She first married Adizua, who did not pay the bride price for her, a judgement on love and personal satisfaction over convention and tradition. By making her choice, Efuru fulfils her rights denied by the patriarchal belief that a woman's marriage is some form of economic transaction to her family. This law rearranges marriage within her culture, defining it as a union based on mutual respect and not economic obligation.

In doing so, Nwapa invalidates the abhorred cultural perception that traces a woman's worth to her ability to create offspring. Efuru's struggle with infertility and her ultimate resignation to a childless life thus point to the limiting standards that patriarchal conceptions of parenthood impose. Nwapa does not portray motherhood as one of those primary responsibilities at all but rather as one of several paths to satisfaction, aside from challenging the belief that women have to adhere to this role for acceptance or identity. Nwapa represents Efuru as one who realizes that there is value other than in motherhood, which helps in broadening the understanding of womanhood.

The novel explores themes of empowerment through spirituality, and Efuru's connection with the goddess Uhamiri offers her an unconventional source of power outside conventional female gender roles. As she assumes her role as a Goddess, Efuru acquires emotional and spiritual strength that helps her to resist the social forces around her with greater self-control. This spiritual connection not only provides meaning but also gives an identity beyond the role of wife or mother; it establishes her as a person with intrinsic worth and agency.

One of the strongest themes in Efuru is economic independence. She portrays herself as being independent economically through trade. As a matter of fact, Efuru's business success dares the patriarchal conviction that women should be financially dependent on men. She gains her wealth and exceeds the confines of typical homebound chores, hence asserting her independence and challenging the view that economic security is a male monopoly.

Nwapa redefines female identity through the multi-dimensional Efuru, reaching beyond the expected boundaries. Efuru's fulfilment encompasses a number of dimensions: love, spirituality, and financial success, which deepen the idea of womanhood, which is grounded in autonomy and self-determination. This reconceptualization of female identity questions the categories that patriarchy laid down and proposes that one model of womanhood becomes transformed into a principle of independence and self-realization.

In other words, Efuru critically examines the patriarchal views of Igbo society with a heroine who restructures marriage, rejects motherhood as the ultimate determiner of worth, gains strength through spirituality, obtains economic independence, and personifies the reimagined woman. The way in which Nwapa elaborates upon Efuru's journey only serves to stress those struggles which women undertake within a patriarchal-dominated society while at the same time putting forth their wills and resilience, making Efuru a signature work within feminist literature.

On the other side, in *Mornings in Jenin*, Susan Abulhawa tells the story of Amal, whose rise in empowerment would find itself wrapped around traumatic experiences, identity, and resilience within one of the most tortured histories of any people (the Palestinian). This novel, spanning generations, presents the development of Amal's identity and resilience as she struggles with the marginalizing circumstances her family and community have endured within the Jenin refugee camp. Amal's personality embodies the tragedy and hopes of the refugee family. The father instils in her a strong attachment to the land, where he says, "Palestine belongs to you, as you

belong to it." This told to Amal will be her identifying principles and motivation in life, setting her course of actions within a framework of turmoil and bereavement.

When she grows up, Amal grapples with the force of dislocation. Her story represents the struggle to weigh her Palestinian origin against the expectations of Western culture, especially her experiences in the United States. The tensions between the two spheres forge a tough setting for Amal, pressing upon her to balance the demands for assimilation with the duty to preserve her heritage. She follows her drive for empowerment and self-sufficiency through pursuing education against the role of a woman preordained by her culture. Her academic pursuits reflect her desire for independence and signify the greater struggle for women's rights in her community, as education becomes a powerful modality for her liberation.

The story portrays her pursuit of education as an opening toward personal and communal liberation. Through her father's lessons, one sees the strong force of knowledge as he presents it. It gives her a sense of independence and strength. Since Amal maintains her commitment to formal education, it is seen as deviant within her social context, yet it allows her to build an independent self that represents the visions of many females in Palestinian society. This is one of the ways that education will enable Amal to define herself and struggle against the boundaries placed on her by her circumstances

The trauma brought by war and displacement affects Amal's strength. The novel effectively displays the psychological impact of violence and loss-brutality to home and family through Amal's observations. Indeed, these strengthen her resolve against despair as she learns to convert personal tragedies into sources of strength. Her story characterizes one of the most powerful ingredients for empowerment: rising above tragedy and even coming out with meaning in adversity. It is this resilience that brings out Amal's ability not only to endure but also to reclaim her power in a world most often working against her.

Amal's road to empowerment serves as one of the major narratives involving resiliency, identity, and hope in the novel. Abulhawa's protagonist is confronted by her cultural belonging, her transformation through education, and her resilience as a consequence of trauma. Amal's story is but one example of personal growth in the face of a greater Palestinian struggle for justice and recognition under the conditions of displacement and violence. This is a testament to the human spirit that struggles for identity and empowerment within the framework of loss and dislocation.

Both novels, *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, point out a complicatedly focused generation of narratives concerning women, endangered by patriarchy and colonial or socio-economic turmoil. The accounts depicted herein offer an insightful and multi-layered look at the nature of women's empowerment and the challenges faced by their protagonists within the enabling frameworks set by colonial and patriarchal influences.

Efuru addresses collective identity, whereas *Mornings in Jenin* emphasizes the individual experiences of displaced and dispossessed Palestinians. *Efuru* focuses on the central character whose identity is intricately linked to the land where she experiences rape. *Mornings in Jenin* presents Amal's identity is shaped by the land from which she has been displaced. Efuru's childlessness is not viewed as her problem but as an issue altogether social and even political by Amal. While motherhood changed Efuru, Amal altered the definition of motherhood, which produced a world of hopelessness and violence that infected Amal's consciousness. Both authors create these stories to explain the specific and universal levels of struggle for survival associated with enforced external and internal displacement. Their use of feminine consciousness and the power of women's guilds enhances the stories and makes them rich, flowing, and appealing.

Even though *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru* embrace different historical and cultural backgrounds, the empowerment of women, either under post-colonial or patriarchal oppression, is a common theme between these two novels. There is another instance where Efuru's confidence and flexibility to effect change can be seen as expressions of feminist empowerment. For example, the process through which Efuru's gendered identity was constructed, as well as her self-actualization project of being a loving mother and wife despite all the odds posed by her socially imposed and voluntary single status. In the end, the women in Efuru appear to solidify their efforts toward self-emancipation, and liberation.

Equally, in *Mornings in jenin*, an underlying key to the main action is the search for belonging and for an identity pursued in the wake of countless de-identifying traumas. Amal's possession of things and self were actualized only when a displacement by another finally allowed her to claim place and particularity. The duality of identity as Palestinian and Jewish has resonated in identifications of women, Muslims, and Christians, within the larger national identity and its interaction. What sets the novels apart from one another is the set of limitations in which patriarchal and colonial portrayals have taken shape. For instance, Atta Kota the God of the lake,

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symbolizes her and projects this symbol onto herself. Women have sought to carve out their own domains of power through all colonial and postcolonial history. In other words, the characters of both novels, despite the strong influences of cultural and historical backgrounds, attempt to exercise their own free will. Moreover, they keep remodeling their identities and thus exerting control over their lives. The two novels highlight the central issue, whether directly or indirectly pointed out by Women in *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, within the journey of women into self-actualization bound by patriarchal and postcolonial influences.

4.4 Self-Empowerment and Self-Realization

The central question of both novels is whether men and women can realize their personal autonomy, and if they can undergo self-realization. In *Mornings in Jenin*, both Amal, Yousuf and David undergo autonomy. In *Efuru*, the title character seeks autonomous self-expression, independence, and intimacy only to have her needs, at last, crushed by societal norms. Yet while both Amal and Efuru emphasis the importance of self-realization that remains for them the most significant aspect of their lives. Although the novels are quite different in form, narrator, and writing styles, they share a theme of individual self-expression and freedom within the context of historical, political, and cultural cause and effect. The characters in the novels are expected to live in a certain way, experiencing success and failure. At the same time, the characters possess personal characteristics, while men and women who possess the same characteristics are held in higher regard in society. The social constraints against gaining success create a psychological problem in the characters, making them a conduit for social reforms.

Autonomy and self-realization in literature are recurring themes and are even more significant when addressed as a result of political or social limitations. Autonomy is the ability of any person to enforce control over their own existence through freedom of choice, independence, and action. Likewise, self-realization enables the individual to move past identity constraints and social constructs, thus becoming more autonomous. Given this capability for self-definition, an individual can develop their personality and aims free of social restrictions, thereby realizing their potential. Autonomy and self-realization are thus means to challenge such stratification by

authority and demand change through conscious growth conjuring empowerment. A vivid study of characters who are capable of doing these acts of personal exploration can be found in the novels that set women who strive to be autonomous and attempt to achieve self-realization and self-recognition.

Self-realization and autonomy in literature are transforming symbols into conscious knowledge, which brings awareness of the self and one's relations with others. The literary artists participate in the process with the readers and the writers, thereby giving a life to the character so that he may live a life and develop character traits. In addition, autonomy can allow for political self-constitution and self-respect and self-determination is practical core of social constructs and imperative in a democracy. Growth and development of person matters for long-term welfare as well as economic and income growth.

Mornings in Jenin is a novel that spans four generations of a Palestinian family living in the historically charged region of Israel and Palestine. The characters in this novel interact with forces beyond their control, among them the invasion of Jewish settlers, the dictatorial might of the Israeli state and its military, and the susceptibility of small towns to collude in the corruption of those that rule them. As the characters grow older, these forces shape their attitude to issues of love, personal fulfillment, and survival. One noticeable theme is the quest for autonomy in the face of political repression, military control, and the police state established by the Israelis. Naturally, the main characters respond to these forces differently; some yearn for autonomy, spearhead wars of patriotism and heroism, and acquire disillusionment; some welcome it as a moral semblance and seek a confined individualism that militates against it. This part of the novel features four interrelated autobiographies that dramatize the few ways that Palestinians cleave to in affirming themselves on a path to personal realization.

Majed and Amal are born in exile during a jet-setting period that lasts a quarter of a century and takes them through three different life spaces: first, the relatively free and multicultural Beirut; secondly, the militarily controlled state-like autonomy of the Palestinian regions; and thirdly and finally, the Israeli-imposed slavery of a political ghetto in the southern fringe of occupied Lebanon. All the characters turn under Israeli military occupation, the complete social isolation put in place by the Israelis, and the tight walls that circumscribe and suffocate Palestinian social life and mental activities. Being a force of political power, the occupation exercises the further constraint of

policing the mind at unconscious as well as conscious levels. Through their narratives, readers begin to see the impossibility of locating a straightforward longing for personal fulfillment or an ethically embraced code of morality at the root of human motivation; just like happiness and duty, autonomy arises as a subject position of the person and refers to movements within the sphere of the self and the other, from desires as small as that for a pair of shoes to the larger struggle for dignity that is found in the legal and human rights conditions.

The historical backdrop makes the quest seem rather unlikely; despite the enduring sense of home, place in the present, and absence of the problem of occupation to diplomacy, even the aptitude to love is seen through the projection of the brutality of Palestinians and their unchanging culture to one another. Within this space of collective imagination, the novel initiates an attempt to encircle the doublings and complications that the possibility always holds in check at the level of individual volition.

Mornings in Jenin deals with a journey towards autonomy in a particular sociopolitical context, which is significantly shaped by the socio-political realities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is situated against the backdrop of the displacement of Palestinians from their homeland and the consequent and continued violence. In particular, the narrative is deeply enmeshed in the experience of the Palestinian liberation struggle from the 1940s to the present. The quest for autonomy in *Mornings in Jenin* is significantly complicated because the Palestinian characters' sense of self has become intricately interwoven with the politics of their time. Consequently, their desires necessarily prove resistant to the formal subjugation to Israel or to acceding to Israel's "right" to be in Palestine. The epic nature of the story situates it on the world stage where racial subjugation and exclusion are renounced as being inherently prejudicial and devastating to humanity.

The narrative underpinned by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict over land, identity, and notions of belonging and freedom, while also incorporating intersecting themes such as colonial legacies, globalization, trauma, and gender. Moreover, the characters are life-worldly people, an extensive set of interpersonal relationships based on shared emotional connections, to show interconnectedness in society. *Mornings in Jenin* hinges on a dilemma and the existential freedom to update the quest for autonomy, with a focus on how her socio-political path differs from the pronouncements in a society that takes the same meta-historical journey. The string is tied up to

show their relationship. The story sheds light on how the personal and individual are intertwined, but it also shows how involvement can negotiate the reality between the self and reality. A comprehensive paper must relocate the quest for autonomy from the character to the canon of the lives of Palestinian indigenous people.

The complexity of Amal's identity is strongly linked with her heritage as a Palestinian and the accompanying historical trauma, penetrate deep into her interpersonal relationships. At the center of her life, wrapped in an emotional bond, are her family—the greater world of Palestinians. These relationships, in fact, are at the core of her being and have continued to provide continuity and some semblance of stability during times of displacement and cultural upheaval. Her family remains an important source of emotional nourishment, a carrier of traditions and shared memories that deepen her attachment to a collective identity. Even when Amal is far away from the physical landscape, the same emotional depth of such associations remains strong, underlining the insistent facets of cultural and family affiliations.

While Amal's relationships are close-knit, their quality also reflects a troubled pattern of intimacy and vulnerability inextricably linked to the trauma she has encountered. The personal struggle she feels with regard to closeness and trusting others illustrates an ongoing psychological consequence common to the Palestinian historical narrative of violence, loss, and forcible separation. This has marked indelible scars in her emotional psyche in the form of apprehension toward trusting and an underlying fear of emotional exposure. Consequently, full-fledged relationships are pretty difficult for Amal to handle, whereby traumatic wounds seem to come up when there is a need for closeness or emotional intimacy.

Her experiences also reflect the quality of life inside and outside of her cultural identity. While relationships prove to be a strong point for her and reflect pride in her identity, they also prove to be a reminder of unresolved pain attached to a homeland that remains unreachable. In this sense, Amal's relational struggles cannot be understood as a matter that is purely personal but rather are part of a greater narrative of persons in diasporic or stateless communities for whom identity is negotiated with persistence under the shadow of historical and cultural upheaval. It is thus that Amal's story represents a sensitive rendering of how shared memory and individual trauma come together to bend and shape human relationships, showing both the strength and fragility of the human spirit.

The various implications of autonomy are strongly intertwined with the cultural and social contexts that both define and confine her existence throughout Efuru's passage in the novel. She passes through a society full of strict gender roles and expectations from the community; her story is yet one of remarkable assertions of agency and independence. Despite the pervasive constraints imposed by expectations that women fall into traditional roles of marriage and motherhood, Efuru uncommonly sails those limitations, both self-consciously and responsibly.

Central to Efuru's empowerment is a clear, conscious decision and a willingness to accept the consequences of her actions. In this self-determination, she is not merely reacting passively to her situation but actively and deliberately pursuing herself. Her spiritual convictions are part and parcel of this process, which gives her consolation and a deeper existential comprehension. Through spiritual communion, Efuru gathers the inner strength that sustains her against societal judgment and personal hardship.

Besides, Efuru's road to independence demarcates her from those ladies who might be more willing to correspond to societal expectations rather than seek their happiness. Her story testifies that self-realization can rise above all influences coming from without. She does not seek validation by adhering to conventional ways. Instead, she takes a different path, embracing spiritual wholeness and independence as key elements of her character. By such an attitude, she underlines her progressive thinking in a society that so often tries to belittle the potential of women and shows tensions between individual aspirations and pressures from society.

In contrast, Efuru can be interpreted as a dynamic and complex character who exemplifies the struggle to carve an identity in a society with repressive tendencies. The work compounds the narrative by taking the readers through an intensive examination , among other issues, independence, the quest for inner peace, and self-empowerment within a sociopolitical paradigm that largely overlooks the agency and will of women. The story pleads for her autonomy while debating the high price associated with securing self-sufficiency against the forces of societal antagonism.

Relations are complex and play a vital role in shaping Efuru's experiences and character development. On the one hand, her marital and friendly relationships bring into view her unending struggle to assert her will in a society that very much counts on traditional roles of marriage and motherhood for women. These marriages reflect several dualities of her life and reveal a highly

independent and strong-willed lady while at the same time showing her vulnerability and the psychological sufferings, she undergoes within a structure of patriarchy that further marginalizes women for their non-conformity to tradition. From Efuru's friendships, we learn both the togetherness and the strangerhood that comes with not conforming. This makes her a slightly empowered woman who, however, yields to loneliness easily. The multi-faceted, at times contradictory relationships within the story also feed into strength and isolation issues; hence, Efuru's narrative is portraying gender roles and societal conventions.

Efuru's spirituality, particularly her connection with Uhamiri, is a significant aspect of her persona as well as a major facet of her way of living in her society. Uhamiri, the goddess of the river worshipped in her culture, serves as a guide and a source of strength for Efuru, as the latter has internalized the former in her upbringing. It is such a bond that gave her the resolve and purpose that characterizes the fearless way she faces the liquid realities of life. In her connectedness to Uhamiri, Efuru is able to develop a hardiness beyond the human capacity to deal with incredibly complex experiences of personal and social loss with the added and of self-control.

In addition, Efuru's spiritual contentedness and commitment make her distinct from others and give her distinction within her conservative community. Also, her typical relationship with the supernatural world contrasts with the conventional expectations that a woman has to face, as well as the attitude of society since the spiritual power and autonomy of the protagonist contrast with some of the conventional practices. Nevertheless, this spiritual individuality places her in a form of empowerment so rare and transformative that she can redefine her role within the patriarchal structure. It adds to her status and even strengthens her self-respect and dignity amid pressures from society and personal heartbreak. Uhamiri, as a goddess, represents more than just a figure to her; rather, she has an understanding of life that supports and empowers her so that she is able to make sense of situations that could otherwise cause despair.

This spiritual journey of Efuru is an amazing story of self-realization and self-awareness, culminating in the quiet yet profound acceptance of her place as an outsider in society. It is a journey of gradual awakening to realize that true fulfilment and self-worth are not related to being a wife or mother, as society would expect, but come from a deep connection to her spirituality. This process of growing up points toward the victory of an individual over the cultural bonds and reworks out her identity in her voice.

At the heart of Efuru's self-awareness is her enduring belief in Uhamiri, the river goddess. Though many members of her community are less concerned with such beliefs, Efuru draws immense consolation and meaning from hers, which give her strength and direct her through her life in turmoil. Being connected to Uhamiri means more than religious adherence; it is an alignment with a higher sense of self-willed purpose. With the spiritual connection, Efuru is further aware of her wants, values, and limitations; she places her inner life over the external ways of validation. This realization becomes a radical act of self-assertion in the cultural landscape that imposes rigid expectations on women's roles and identities.

Efuru's self-awareness enables her to regard her inability to fit into society from another perspective. Instead of relating the failure to fit in with others as her failure, she comes to understand that being an outsider is due to society's failure to satisfy her spiritual and emotional needs. Such a perception gives her the emotional detachment she needs to be herself. Her spirituality is the manifestation of her sense of self-fulfillment, which, from the perspective of her spiritual beliefs, acts as a soft challenge to the culture. Efuru is spiritually independent and aware; this becomes one of those ways of transforming cultural marginalization into an opportunity for personal growth and empowerment.

Furthermore, in the journey of Efuru, the author considers the bigger theme of what an individual identity is against the expectations of society. In a society where so many times a woman's worth is measured by her compliance with such predefined roles, the denial of Efuru to accept these expectations qualifies her as more in tune with what completeness truly means. Her spiritual convictions are a refuge to which the dictations of society's opinion cannot reach, giving her confidence to look upon her status as an outsider, not as a source of weakness but as a conduit through which her identity and individuality are proven. Efuru shows just how spiritual strength can empower one to perceive one's self truly. With the greatest regard for one's inner truth rather than any conformation to others, it speaks powerfully how spiritual fulfilment plays in personal growth.

On the other hand , Susan Abulhawa's novel, *Mornings in Jenin*, reflects a central character, Amal, in her journey within the ruthless realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The life of a woman is drastically emotional and intergenerational; it shows in detail the struggle and resilience of her Palestinian family through decades-from the displacement of their village in 1948, growing

up in a refugee camp, to eventually finding refuge in the United States. Amal's story is not a personal tale but a broad narrative of the sufferings, losses, and hopes of an entire people. Her character embodies within itself all the complexities of identity, the pain of exile, and the everlasting longing to belong in order to be able to live in peace.

In contrast, *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa tells the story of Efuru, a remarkable and independent woman in Nigerian society. Efuru does not fit into any traditional category of marriage, motherhood, and economic success in the Igbo. From a history of pain brought about by infertility and being a woman in a patriarchal world, Efuru rises to emanate a resourceful, elegant, free woman. Nwapa's novel, one of the pioneering works of African literature written by a woman, emphasizes the strength and complexity of women in African cultures and critiques the societal norms that restrict their potential.

But while Amal and Efuru struggle within a society bound by unyielding cultural norms and gender expectations, their endeavors toward self-realization and freedom are still determined by the given setting of living and historical era. She draws from the trauma and loss that come with war and displacement to fuel her identity and home. An interpersonal tragedy brackets her story at all times pitted against the communal tragedy of her people, an example of how political strife permeates the human spirit. While Efuru's heroine stands facing the demands of her culture from women, it is here that her rebellion points to the struggle for women's autonomy in such a patriarchal society. The deep-seated strength of Efuru comes out in the way she is neither defined by being married, having children, nor by any conventional standards of women but derives satisfaction from her achievements and faith.

Upon comparison of these characters, Amal and Efuru, a multitude of experiences highlighting the influence of time and space on women's self-fulfilment. While both stories mirror the strong influence of social expectations and cultural paradigms on people, they also hail the strength and self-reliance of women who would dare venture onto paths contrary to those expected of them. Their stories of Amal and Efuru remind us of the universal need for a feeling of freedom, identity, and self-fulfillment, but they also bring into focus different challenges faced by women of other ages and climes.

Both novels have characters that boldly challenge societal expectations of marriage and parenthood. The decision of Amal to delay marriage in order to pursue her educational goals is a

decision quite contrary to the traditional Palestinian notion of early marriage and childbearing by women. In *Efuru*, the protagonist makes one decision that unmistakably sets about questioning the accepted practices of Igbo culture: the decision to elope and marry without paying the bride price. This defiant gesture establishes Efuru's independence and, at the same time, lays a foundation upon which her later defying acts against patriarchal expectations in the book are built.

4.5 Feminism and Intersectionality

Female experience often means different perceptions of men and women. To explore the gendered self, meaning the image of a woman, the representation of women and how she is identified in literary texts, has been the cornerstone of feminist criticism. From Greek tragedies to today's postmodern literature, representation of women and their desires, their ideological dominance and deconstruction, aesthetics of objectivity in fiction, gynocriticism, power struggles, and conflicts within families occupy a legitimate position in feminist threads.

African American feminist writers talk about the "double oppression" of a writer and a woman and relate that African American experiences differ from mainstream feminist official acts. The author seeks to reveal this woman's lost literary tradition and attempts to sort out the confusion and complications in women's literary expression. However, this is possible only after revisiting the literary heritage of this region of the world with a renewed vision. Reading written texts in this new vision makes sense as the study of the socio-cultural history of the emergence of these texts.

As an African woman, Nwapa's world was one of the strict divisions of labour between men and women. Women could work the land for a few hours only and then had to attend to all their other work, leaving the fields for the men and the children. Influences of the English culture that encroached with colonialism were also present. It was not the English colonial rulers who acted as destroyers of the traditional society; the men did so by themselves, taking up the terms of colonization. Generally, politics and literature in Africa, and thus Nigeria, tended to be masculine-dominated. The underlying theme of the relationship between male and female, between the wife and the husband, directly concerns Nwapa's story about a woman. It is Nwapa's literary techniques

that make the book applicable to those who wish to pursue a feminist approach to the criticism of African literature in general.

The novel Flora portrays feminist consciousness. Its primary focus is on the oppression of women. In this respect, she identifies issues that women go through in an attempt to define themselves and make independent decisions. This aspect fits together with the tenets of feminism, where critics argue that women should be allowed to express themselves and make decisions without being forced to follow the dictates of men.

The novel has endeared itself with several themes touching on women, including autonomy, identity, subjugation, the struggle against patriarchy, love, parental dynamics, motherhood, the financial weakness of women in a patriarchal society, marriage, and fortunes. The narrative of *Efuru* mirrors the African women and their struggle against the pressure to be what African society expects them to be. Efuru's story is the story of many women in Africa who must seek not only individual discovery but also a thread of cultural subjugation to acquire total freedom and self-discovery.

A dominant trope in *Efuru* is the attention paid to the archetype of the curious African femininity. As the novel navigates this trope, it probes for the cultural, social, and economic origins of African feminine identity. From the one-sided view of the etymology of exploration, though, the story of Efuru situates its themes foursquare in the contexts of Africa's broader feminist concerns: the victimization, economic barriers, and moral strictures women suffer under patriarchy. The struggle of the spirit husbands only brings to the foreground the commonality of male heterogeneous dominance across Africa and, finally, the ways in which women's lives are burdened.

Efuru and her community are exposed from a feminist perspective. Efuru depicts gender roles as both natural and socially constructed. In the story, the thesis clearly portrays that the nature of humanity depicts a woman as a vulnerable creature. The expectations of society on women and how they are ridiculed when such expectations are not met are highlighted. When we look at the novel Efuru, it is very obvious that the female characters challenge the roles that are traditionally ascribed to women.

Nwapa is centred on the life and times of its protagonist, Efuru. It philosophically examines her predicament at different stages of her life. Efuru praises the cherished characteristics of women as it embraces the strength and independence of its protagonist against the odds of societal norms. The different characters in the novel go a long way in portraying a feminist outlook. The characters no doubt underline the main stand that women should be allowed to express their potential as human beings irrespective of cultural reservations.

Efuru, the protagonist of the novel, possesses a rare combination of beauty, virtues, and humanity. Efuru's character is influenced by her experiences in life, especially in her relationships with men, her childhood background, and her events in marriage. Efuru is many things to many people. She is, therefore, capable of many roles, which range from the heroine and the goddess to the lover, wife, mother, worthy daughter, in-law, and neighbour of the community. The two extreme philosophies in society also shape Efuru's actions. Hence, by being human, Efuru, who conforms to what society classifies as 'good' or 'normal' according to the narrator, cannot escape the consequences of her actions. Every character in the novel has certain roles to play, especially with the development of the protagonist

Efuru's main theme, the struggle of a black woman, was against false depictions of Africa by both male authors and white women's aid organizations, especially regarding women. Efuru is an allegory of contemporary African women's individual development, African identity, and African future. Efuru is a young woman in contemporary African society who is searching for her life's better half. She is insightful and wants to be her own person, unlike some motherly figures who appear inwardly. Efuru's need to be fulfilled and to be special among others leads her on a path of self-discovery. She is pure and frank and gives hope for future African women. She is seeking freedom and power. She is in charge of her needs.

Mornings in Jenin is an intergenerational story following the Abulheja family through the tumultuous twentieth century. The decision to start the novel in the village of Ein Hod was quite significant when considering the political and cultural impacts of such a decision. Following the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, approximately 800,000 Palestinians were either expelled or fled their homes, leading to the establishment of 530 settlements in their place. What results from such a decision and resonates within the text of *Mornings in Jenin* is the effect of physical violence on subsequent generations. Indeed, while the narrative is often quite detailed both with

period and location, it makes no significant distinction between 1948 and 1967, the year in which the Six-Day War marked the start of the occupation of Palestine.

It is on this premise that a careful reading of *Mornings in Jenin* reveals the complex relationships among gender dynamics, national identity, and the lived experience of Palestinians. This is a story that follows through with an in-depth look into how Palestinian women negotiate and resist complex systems of oppression-from within, such as deep-rooted patriarchal norms in their community, to without, in the form of colonial domination. The dual lens here displays in this novel that the resistance, agency, and textured strength of the women are exercised in their identities amidst territorial and other plural forces. Abulhawa thus discusses a very cogent portrayal of how the struggles of Palestinian women reflect larger themes of survival, solidarity, and resistance while holding central positions in personal and collective stories of trauma and defiance.

Interestingly, the novel underlines how women's bodies and their roles get politicized into nationalist discourses as representing the nation itself. Characterization of female characters reveals that they are not merely individuals but symbols who project strength in painful shared trauma that the Palestinian people have experienced. According to Noora Badwan, women's bodies are "nationalist symbols and strategic victims of violence," denoting the manipulations of their reproductive roles by both Palestinian and Israeli nationalist agendas for the advancement of certain political causes. This framing of women, both symbolic and instrumental, presents a complicated duality where women are revered and controlled, caught in the accumulation of cultural and political expectations within which their identity is reduced to an instrument of nationalism. Such representations signify how women, along with their bodies and agency, are simultaneously celebrated and victimized; such depictions signal the critical ways in which nationalist ideologies structure female agency and subjectivity in relation to occupation and resistance.

While *Mornings in Jenin* focuses on the lives and struggles of the male characters, it is ultimately through the female characters that the plot is actively advanced. The central character of the novel, Amal is introduced into a scene, for instance, by the creek, playing with and caring for her brother-an image which, in addition to emphasizing her role as nurturer, also serves to foreshadow the ongoing obligation towards others that she will continue to bear throughout the

book. As the novel unfolds, readers increasingly become enchanted with the perspective of female characters whom the readers start forming an emotional bond.

The story articulately weaves in the threads of Huda's life. She seems to be very much in love with Hasan, whom she marries but finds little acceptance from the Banias family right from the beginning. Huda faces a number of tragic losses, including the loss of her sons and the long disappearance of her husband, while Amal faces her tragic separations from her family. Continual violence and massacres displace these women, taking them from their traditional role as mothers and reducing personal agency while changing their identity to one of survival rather than choice.

The theme of motherhood is presented paradoxically, both as a source of strength and yet a domain full of conflict. This story shows how mothers bear an enormous burden of responsibility when rearing sons destined for nation building purposes; it dramatizes the great pressures endured by mothers. Abulhawa takes up how Palestinian nationalism appropriates the roles of women as mothers, expecting them to reproduce to further the national cause at the cost of any personal aspirations or their emotional lives. This echoes feminist critiques of the way in which culture can curtail the free agency of women and condition them toward certain modes of being.

Intersectionality remains a vital framework for feminist approaches to literature. The interaction and intersection of our identities and allegiances are constructive. They are much more than merely additive aspects of our identity; rather, they interact and constitute a pivotal factor of influence in the experiences represented in the text. The intersection of race, gender, and nationality constructs the multifaceted resistance and suffering, especially in the struggles that women face against the occupation. This can be specifically demonstrated through the lives, experiences, and roles of resistance taken by both Amal and Dalia. Personal agency is defined as the conjunction of personal struggle with the greater nationalist movement. The agency of women shows up as a communal act of resistance, the embodiment of struggle and wills entrusted to them, and is fully entwined in the individual stories of their experience.

Abulhawa's narrative brings to the front an intricate relationship between gender and politics; Palestinian women's lives are intertwined with their national cause. Thereby, it clearly shows that political violence affects women in regard to their identity and roles, both within family settings and in social structures. This multilevel approach shares common points with the contemporary feminist point of view, which realizes and underlines the intersectionality of the

different forms of oppression-colonialism, patriarchy, and nationalism-which together create unique experiences for women.

The story reveals that in the wartime context, racial dynamics oppress women. A specific example is the marginality of the victim's suffering, as depicted by Abulhawa . The subjugation of through Amal's and Dalia's experiences as the space shifts, defying the constraints of location and binding past and present together. It is thus through literature that varied experiences of women in war come into sharp focus, and an intersectional investigation of sexual violence in war is required to challenge these reductive accounts of women as always and already homogeneous victims. It underlines a collective possibility of an experience that can transcend the moment of conflict by centring attention on those who never lie at the centre of local or global narratives. These theories become an important tool in deciphering, as it were, the struggles a woman goes through within the text. Her struggle and pain simply cannot be belittled by attributing them solely to her identity as a woman or as a Palestinian.

Women in the story resist the repressive systems at each turn with subtle forms of resilience. At the center is the heroine, Amal, who braves her pain and loss in search of her identity in turmoil. This juxtaposes a feminist notion of resistance, one that is never manifest in an overt revolt but rather in the reclaiming of human agency in everyday life. Their ability to adapt and find meaning in their suffering looks toward a feminist philosophy that values women's perspectives and experiences.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Susan Abulhawa mobilizes a multilayered narration filled with the silenced voices of Palestinian women to underline their struggles and survival under a double bind of patriarchal and colonial oppression. This narration depicts how societal expectations and nationalistic compulsions confine women's narratives within the broad and encompassing fabric of Palestinian discourse. In this novel, one learns how women's voices are silenced by the strong patriarchy that exists among Palestinians. The women characters keep silent when there is trauma and loss, and they are seen carrying on their traditional roles, hiding their pain and yearning.

This might be reflected in how Amal's mother, Dalia, was almost paralyzed emotionally since the time of her son's disappeared; such incidents reveal that women's sorrow is minimized or taken as less than the tales of loss and sacrifice attributed to men. It also pointed out a deeply set societal

tendency toward the valorization of male stories at the cost of rendering female experiences inconsequential.

Both novels deal with the positions of women within the patriarchal structures and their struggles toward assertive self-determination. Both are in close conversation with feminist theories and ideas. These books fathom the intricacies of women's social roles, their plight, and the strategies they put into play to resist their oppressors and affirm their own autonomy, highlighting the experiences of women and giving voice and perspective to them. They discuss how these works dare traditional concepts of gender roles, celebrate female solidarity, and criticize patriarchal conventions. Both novels reflect how women resist patriarchal practices in their pursuit of empowerment in society. *Efuru* disputes traditional gender functions and expectations in the portrayal of the protagonist in her pursuit of financial independence, fighting against societal pressures to get married, and seeking spiritual guidance. In fact, *Mornings in Jenin* reflects such strength and perseverance by Palestinian women against war, displacement, and, at the same time, patriarchal oppression. Dalia, Amal, and Sara all represent different ways in which women's resistance is negotiated through complex social and political environments.

While both sources investigate how women negotiate patriarchal positions within these divergent communities, they plot ways through which such molds may be broken. Amal's disregard for cultural expectations with respect to marriage and motherhood, her pursuit of education, and further independence are examples of patriarchal constraints. These characteristics are well portrayed in the novel. Another representative book is Efuru, the one representing complicated situations of polygamy, marriage, and women's agency in Igbo society. This is through exposing the negative consequences of patriarchal behaviour and the passed-on traditions down the ages.

Economic independence is a powerful tool with which women can challenge profound gender norms. In one story, women assume what has traditionally been the male role of hard work and supporting the economic security of their families in the context of conflict. Yet this shift in economic activity not only challenges the traditional role of the family but also provides women with an opportunity to exercise forms of agency that males have conventionally dominated. In another setting, the economic input of women is crucial, as portrayed by a very successful businesswoman. Indeed, her achievements have driven home the importance of female economic independence as a model of self-reliance and empowerment. Both stories depict economic

independence as giving women the resources with which to challenge patriarchy and, consequently, redefine their roles as producers and decision-makers in families and society at large.

Both stories reflect on motherhood and the ideals that come with it, showing different ways to find fulfilment that is beyond child-bearing. *Mornings in Jenin* is a story of a mother dealing with trauma and displacement focuses on a female character who struggles with what society expects from her. It was underlined because of the inner conflict she felt about traditional motherhood, which changed her identity and the dynamics with her family. On the other hand, the Efuru's story contemplates cultural pressures related to fertility and questions whether the value of a woman lies only in her being able to bring children into the world. The decision of the protagonist to follow a spiritual journey was another source of fulfilment in which she could easily oppose societal expectations in pursuit of a meaningful life away from socially defined roles. It is these stories that reshape our thinking about womanhood, showing the different ways of achieving identity and fulfilment apart from traditional ascription.

The stories provide sharp critiques of patriarchal limitations, highlighting how these structures limit women's independence. In a specific situation, the expectations related to gender become really intense during times of sociopolitical conflict, where women encounter increased challenges and fewer chances. Yet, within these boundaries, they find ways to resist and become active agents in the preservation of their culture and opposing adversities. Another story also deals with the injustices of gendered social systems, most especially those pertaining to marriage and the social comportment expected from people. The experiences the protagonist goes through reveal several double standards that represent the social challenges women face in the course of seeking autonomy. In both, women show resilience in dealing with and working through such shortcomings, which highlights their strength with respect to restrictive norms and fosters an expanded notion of personal agency.

4.6 Empowering Voices Through Language Use

The novels indicate that Susan Abulhawa does so in *Mornings in Jenin,* while Flora Nwapa accomplishes this task in *Efuru;* both authors strategically use language in their works to underpin themes of female resilience, cultural preservation, and the impact of exogenous forces on old societies. Both authors are making conscious linguistic choices in speaking to and amplifying

marginal voices, challenging dominant discourses, and eliciting an appreciation for the complex, resilient lives that exist in service to their characters.

Flora Nwapa and Susan Abulhawa attract attention to female voices and perspectives through strategic naming and using pronouns in both *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin,* respectively, to foreground their female characters and reinforce their identities and agency. For example, Nwapa constantly names her female characters, thus distinguishing them as individual characters playing distinctive roles and emphasizing their autonomous position within the story. This is in contrast to the trend of male authors during her period to leave the female characters unnamed or little characterized so as to diminish the importance of their role within the story. Additionally, the use of Abulhawa's feminine pronouns, such as "she" and "her," in describing the Palestinian women gives an impression that the women are firm; they practice a number of activities among their families and within their societies. In so doing, both authors emphasize the centrality of their female characters, thereby challenging established modes of storytelling that typically marginalize or exclude women altogether.

Both authors used Adjectives to Challenge Stereotypes. Accordingly, Nwapa's selection of adjectives frequently serves to challenge conventional notions of gender categories. By providing her female characters with characteristics that are normally associated with masculinity, such as "strong," "independent," and "determined," she puts into question the essentialist conception of what it is to be a woman in Igbo society. Her claim that women are capable of opposing the limits that society places on them and obtaining agency on their terms is strengthened by the usage of language that she employs.

In *Efuru*, Flora Nwapa effectively uses Igbo proverbs to give insight into the culture and to enhance both text and theme. Igbo proverbs are not mere expressions in speech but carriers of collective wisdom for moral guidance and expressive values in society. Nwapa's intentional use of these sayings underlines the important aspects of the story, notably those themes of female solidarity and resilience. Ajanupu gives Efuru the proverb, "An elderly person cannot stand by and watch a goat be tied without doing anything." This is enough to bring home to her the reality of her husband Adizua's infidelity and how women's solidarity becomes crucial during periods of turmoil. This particular proverb, among others in the novel, evidences that women are proactive,

giving advice and comfort to others in order to reinstate their roles as resolute women against ills both from society and from within themselves.

Nwapa consequently enriches *Efuru* with cultural relevance while concurrently uplifting the voices of women into prominent positions in the ongoing discourse on power and social justice in their communities. Nwapa employs the profound insights in Igbo proverbs not only as narrative device but also to bring to the front the collective experiences of women in a patriarchal society.

The use of language in the two novels questions and redefines traditional gender identities and dominant societal codes while proving that women can achieve beyond such constraints. *Mornings in Jenin* depicts Abulhawa portraying Palestinian women assuming roles traditionally performed by men. Working in the fields and strongly contributing to the families' economic stability. This struggle against the conventional gendered division of labour underlines the strong character of Palestinian women while at the same time critiquing patriarchal systems. While in *Efuru,* Nwapa mobilizes language to present the achievements of her titular character as a trader and give her a meaningful feeling of independence that reshapes the expectations placed on women in Igbo society. Efuru's ability to manipulate her way and succeed in the male-dominated business landscape sends shock waves to all previous notions about female passivity and subordination. These linguistic choices by both authors establish that women can counter societal limitations and make a mark in every sphere of life. What can be gained from their use of language is that there is more to the fact that typical gender roles do not constrain women but create room for independence and influence in which they make futures.

When Palestinian-American novelist Susan Abulhawa began to write her novel *Mornings in Jenin,* she did so with a conscious effort as she said," to put a Palestinian voice in English literature." It is a purposeful, determined presence against the historical marginalization and distortion of Palestinian narratives in Western literature and political discourse. Abulhawa relates the communal pain and displacement of Palestinians, while reinstating their humanity, agency, and cultural identity through the intergenerational narrative of the Abulheja family.

Writing in English allowed her to reach a far wider audience in the West, for whom Palestinian stories are often either silenced or engulfed by dominant discourses. With her powerful pen, characters fully fleshed out, and in-depth delving into matters of identity, resilience, and loss, Abulhawa bridges cultural gaps in a manner that encourages readers into the complex detail of

Palestinian history and struggle. In so doing, she adds a Palestinian voice to world literature while pointing out the power of storytelling as a tool for cultural preservation, resistance, and connection.

Susan Abulhawa interlaces lyrical prose, intergenerational storytelling, and deeply personal explorations of political themes within her writing in *Mornings in Jenin*. Full of imagery, the descriptions of the Palestinian landscape bring the reader right into the beauty and sadness of a land in conflict: places such as Ein Hod and Jenin. She does so poetically, using metaphors and sensory details that evoke grief, resilience, and hope. Abulhawa's narrative structure covers several generations, with the core formed around the Abulheja family and their struggles through decades of displacement and survival. It puts at centre stage the ways in which historical trauma informs personal identity and amplifies the voices of women whose stories are often buried.

Recurring symbols, like the olive tree, really drive home themes of rootedness and resistance. They connect the personal struggles of the characters to larger cultural and historical stories. Furthermore, her emphasis on Palestinian women like Amal and Dalia resists patriarchal and colonial stories by showing them as active agents navigating systemic oppression. These stylistic decisions monumentally help Abulhawa create a story that really affects readers emotionally. Simultaneously, she underlines the strong points of Palestinian culture and identity, something which is very important as a form of literary and cultural resistance.

Susan Abulhawa deliberately uses Arabic terms throughout the novel, which is supported by a glossary for linguistic and cultural authenticity. For instance, "Yumma, no one excels in culinary skills like you!"(page 6). The way she navigates between the two languages is perfect. This infusion not only enlightens readers on the richness of the Palestinian culture and language but is also a powerful tool against erasing the culture. In refusing complete adherence to the strictures of Western linguistic standards, Abulhawa charges Arabic with meaning in her text, therefore deepening ties to themes of identity, displacement, and resilience within the novel and offering a rare occasion for the Western audience of cultural encounter and understanding.

Moving with growth, Abulhawa and Nwapa develop committed and subtle ways of giving voice to their female characters, challenging dominant cultural and societal discourses, voices that increase the reader's understanding of the female identity. The use of such subaltern languages articulates women's experiences and underlines the cultural resilience that would enable them to sail through and even resist external forces seeking to shape or undermine their roles within

traditional societies. In *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru*, respectively, the use of language is an active tool with which women struggle and reaffirm their agency to resist within both frames of political upheaval and gendered expectations. Abulhawa and Nwapa availed themselves of the facility of language as a means of subverting the patriarchal structures and traditional confines that make the reader contemplate the various intersections of gender, culture, and external pressures. This approach allows for a critical investigation of the constraints set by socially designed norms and encourages readers to reconsider their perceptions about gender roles, identity, and change. The linguistic methods used are integral to the authors' broader arguments; they position language as a key instrument for narrative resistance and cultural reconfiguration.

4.7 Themes and Motifs

Both *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin* are novels centred around highly symbolic stories. The symbols add weight to the personal journeys of the characters, giving their experiences meaning. Both authors, Nwapa and Abulhawa, apply these symbols to bring out the main ideas of identity, strength, and cultural connection. This provides readers with an in-depth look at how personal problems link up with larger historical and cultural forces. Thus, in the novel *Efuru*, it is Efuru's spiritual transformation and her association with the goddess Uhamiri that become powerful symbols of women's liberation, self-actualization, and finally, non-conformity to societal expectations, while in *Mornings in Jenin*, the attachment of Amal to her homeland and her final decision to embrace death as the only means of liberation were the symbols. They depict sacrifice, strong cultural heritage, and the need for personal reconciliation in the face of constant political conflict. In deploying symbols, both authors make the journeys of their characters more emotional while at the same time using cultural symbols and personal sacrifices to illustrate how to understand bigger social and political issues. This gives us a more nuanced picture of how people are able to be strong and locate their identity amidst terrible hardship.

4.7.1 Water as a Symbol of Freedom and Power in *Efuru*

In *Efuru*, water is a major and recurring theme that has closely associated with feminine, spiritual, and resilient ideals. The relationship between Efuru and Uhamiri, the water goddess, forms a vital point in this story because it ascertains not only Efuru's spiritual alignment but also her uniqueness as a non-conformist Woman. Water, represented by Uhamiri, is the fluidity, depth, and strength that Efuru's character and journey truly were. Efuru is silent, strong, and resilient in

a world that seems to want to hold her down. Her link with Uhamiri represents her unique status within the community, one that connects her to a higher spiritual dimension while also taking her beyond the typical responsibilities assigned to women in her society.

The different aspects of Uhamiri also seem to hold the connotations of loneliness and alienation. As much as the women honour and thank Uhamiri, she is still an elusive and solitary figure. This is similar to the way Efuru looks upon the Igbo conventions and expectations regarding women. For Efuru, loneliness is not a passive condition but rather an active part of her personality. Because her relationship with Uhamiri is special and not shared by the majority of women, it makes her admired and left out at the same time. To be advanced mentally and isolated socially at the same time fashions her journey and renders her strong. Efuru's willingness to accept her spiritual link to Uhamiri even though she lives alone is a great testimony of how strong she is and how true she can be to her path. Water symbolism and its connection with Uhamiri reveal not only the spiritual way of being Efuru but also that she is a woman outstanding in the crowd, a strong voice for women's freedom and strength.

4.7.2 The Olive and Fig Trees in *Mornings in Jenin*

An olive tree is an effective symbol of Palestinian tradition and survival throughout the whole novel. It is a symbol of attachment to a homeland and steadfast endurance of a people. To Amal, the protagonist of the book, this olive tree is not a mere part of nature but tangibly representative of her family's past and the historical ties that her family has to the land. The olive tree can be understood as a metaphor of the persistence of the Palestinian people, who grip deep down, like the roots of the tree, at times of persecution and adversity. But it is at this point that Amal was uprooted and displaced, and the meaning of the olive tree can be read as twofold. It represents nothing less than her cultural and family heritage, as well as the profound loss connected with her linkage to her ancestral homeland. The fact that any reference to the olive tree invokes a sense of sadness and longing indicates how much emotional and psychic impact this position of exile has had on Amal's identity. The tree, assuming symbolic overtones, awakens in her a sense of belonging she desperately longs for; hence, it is a continuing attempt to regain the sense of home that has eluded her.

"Palestine was not just a place or a political cause; it was an aching wound in the soul, a symbol of what was lost, and a hope for what might one day be regained."

"Our fig tree's roots ran deep, just like our family roots. It was a part of us, nourishing us and reminding us of where we came from."

4.7.3 Tradition and Womanhood in *Efuru*

Childbirth and marriage in *Efuru* not only represent the expectations of society but are also major symbols of womanhood in Igbo society. The complicated feeling that identifies Efuru with these roles marks her defiance of the established convention inlaid in the community's cultural fabric. Throughout the book, her struggles as a mother, especially her intense sorrow over the loss of her child, become metaphors for her searching self and yearning to define herself outside these so-called strict social roles. The tussle between personal freedom and societal expectation becomes a concern in the face of Efuru's fulfilment-seeking outside the traditionally accepted realms of marriage and motherhood. In so doing, her journey highlighted a search for an independent, authentic self and reflected tensions in treading the balance between the need to satisfy individual desires and social imperatives.

In addition, Efuru's business is a great symbol of her independence, her rejection of the traditional vision of women as a farmer. Through business enterprises, Efuru resists the social assumption of females as bound to household work or a dependency upon males. Her success as a trader allows her to stake out a place for herself in the larger social scene and becomes almost a badge of her persistence and economic autonomy. Efuru's business is literally and symbolically represents her ability to navigate and reconstruct a life she has planned according to her terms against conventional limitations imposed upon her as a woman. In this light, her business represents self-sufficiency, independence, and the opportunities for self-determination within a culture that would more often attempt to diminish women's roles besides one income source.

4.7.4 The Scar of Amal

The scar is a physical and mental potent symbol of trauma, signifying how violence and conflict have kept on affecting Amal's life. These marks upon her body are much more than scars but are representative of profound pain deeply protected within her and shaping her character through the years. Amal's family and community are haunted by the trauma they endured. The wounds remind her of the brutality that shaped her history and are constant reminders of the pain she endured. These scars, visible and invisible, gesture toward much about trauma as an ever-

present in Amal's life and also implicate her relationships with people, herself, and the world around her.

The scar, however, is not a reminder of mere pain but also of persistence and survivorship. Scars like these stands in testimony to Amal's survival and the courage she has been able to garner against such overwhelming suffering; they are a poignant physical manifestation of her resilience. On the other hand, even though they were full of loss and pain, they made known her capability to bear in perseverance. Because her wounds have become intertwined with her sense of self, she has become someone who, despite the traumatizing experience, does not ever stop moving forward. In this sense, the scar is a reminder not only of the victimization and loss defining her but also of quiet defiance of survival, making it at once a source of pain and a symbol of resilience.

Moreover, the scar of Amal goes beyond the personal realm into a symbolic body of collective pain. It is a sign of personal hurt while reflecting the greater experiences of Palestinians. Her scar epitomizes the collective history of her people, portraying the collective trauma of displacement, violence, and loss. The scar connects her individual experience with the bigger picture of Palestinian suffering and survival. Thus, the scar acts as a powerful symbol of both personal and collective pain, enhancing Amal's perception of who she is and what her function is, locating her within the greater historical and cultural context of her people's struggle for justice and self-determination. The scar, therefore, is multilayered, carrying meanings of trauma's enduring effects and unstoppable resilience, "Her scars were memories etched in flesh and bone, reminders of the life she had lived and the suffering she had endured."

4.7.5 The Veil

The veil is multilayered, capturing articulation through cultural identity, individual agency, and the shifting landscape of Amal's self-concept. The veil is a symbolic representation of one's culture, an identity linking an individual to one's cultural community and its established ways. To Amal, the veil is more than its conventional meaning; it has become a symbol of personal decision and definition. Her relation to the veil demonstrates a permanent oscillation between the religious obligation of tradition and the struggle for individual freedom. It points out that her identity has been shaped not only by putting on the mask of societal expectations but also by attempting to reinterpret and redefine these cultural symbols in a manner that best fits her perspective.

The decision of whether to wear or not to wear the veil while Amal negotiates through the difficult complex ways of her identity becomes a metaphor for her journey into self-discovery. The veil is a physical manifestation of the representation of cultural identity that at once personalizes the choice made in expressing one's faith, heritage, and individuality. For Amal, the veil is a matter not just of cultural expectation but of an active process of identity construction through faith and cultural heritage. Indeed, the veil is often an important symbol of change for Amal as she strives to understand her heritage and develop a more autonomous personal identity worn as a declaration of faith or to make a statement of independent mind.

The veil also serves as a faith and cultural connector to stress Amal's relationship with heritage and religious identity. On the other hand, however, her choices concerning the veil underline the fact that she struggles to balance this against a desire to be independent and an individual. The veil thus acts as a bridge to the past, yet it is a means of empowerment; Amal counterbalances respect for tradition with an assertion of her autonomy. The veil becomes the most salient symbol in Amal's journey, standing at the heart of the conflict between continuity and break and echoing the larger themes of identity, faith, and autonomy defining her story.

"She wore the veil not just as a symbol of her culture but as an act of defiance, a reclaiming of dignity in a world that sought to strip it from her."

4.7.6 Education as Identity and Liberation

In Amal, the protagonist of *Mornings in Jenin*, education and language are major pillars for the process of her self-definition and emancipation. Indeed, her love of reading and learning goes beyond an academic interest to a source of rebellion against the chains that have placed upon her in. For Amal, education is used as an element of empowerment to know how to move away from the burdens of violence and displacement. Moreover, this intellectual journey, much like most others, serves to afford her a sense of agency and the ability for self-definition outside of the limits of her current circumstances. Learning to read and engage with books becomes, for Amal, the greater process of seeking self-determination through facilitating her inquiry and making sense of who she is within an extended, often hostile world around her. It is through education that she regains her voice to work her way toward a more autonomous future; knowledge serves as tool toward her freedom.

Language is thus the most significant medium for Amal's continued negotiation of identity; it is also a link between the past and the present. In fact, Amal's continuation of the use of Arabic, even away from home, is one of the most recognizable signs of her relationship with her Palestinian heritage. Using the language, she keeps in close touch with her family and heritage while consolidating a sense of belonging to a collective Palestinian identity. Arabic represents a vehicle of cultural memory and makes her feel connected with her homeland, against which geographical dislocation and physical separation have taken place. By speaking Arabic and thinking in Arabic, Amal reinforces her self-concept and identity in the culture to which she belongs, by whose light she keeps her particularities while facing all the challenges emanating from her life in another culture. The language that Amal uses is also a tool for maintaining her people's culture and an affirmation of identity in the case of exile and the pains of assimilation.

It shows how she has been committed to preserving the heritage that has been dear to her all her life, not only for herself but also for the benefit of those generations yet to come. Language is an expression, and it behaves like a two-edged sword: on the one hand, it preserves her personal and collective identity; on the other hand, it acts as a resistant tool in front of the vanishing of Palestinian culture. Therefore, the relationship with language and education that Amal entertains brings out the privileged roles they play in the development of her identity- a bridge to connect with her past, a route which leads toward her future, "In the refuge of books, Amal found a sanctuary where she could travel beyond the confines of her life as a Palestinian refugee."

4.7.7 The Houses Keys

In the core of *Mornings in Jenin*, the ancestral key to Amal's family home in Palestine represents tangible and intangible links with a lost homeland. The ancestral key is passed on from generation to generation and means more than a piece of metal; it is a major artifact carrying within itself the depth of Amal and her family's connection with the homeland. For Amal, the key speaks to a duality; it epitomizes aspirations toward future return, while it serves to underscore deep pain related to displacement. It is deep longing-both a commitment and an unforgiving reality, one of not being able to return to a place that has been irrevocably altered by conflict and displacement. This key was a significant symbol of lost home, signaling the unrealized wish to recover at least part of one's past, living within the context of their separation from it. The key serves to highlight the central theme of exile-a lasting emotional and psychological impact that displacement inflicts

on both Amal and her family. It would symbolize one picture of the loss, something that might never be accessible anymore, but at the same time be a silent witness, invariable, of their continuous relationship with the territory from which they were forced.

"A key is nothing without its lock, just as the land means little without its people."

4.7.8. Isolation and Belonging

Both Efuru and Amal are alienated in various ways through the peculiar bonds they have with cultural and spiritual symbols-Uhamiri in the case of Efuru and the Palestinian homeland in the case of Amal. While the symbolism offers them solace, it reflects the dislocation of the protagonists from their environment. Efuru's spiritual alienation is manifested through her relation to Uhamiri; Amal's Palestinization brings into focus the sense of dislocation throughout her exile. It is potently represented through symbols that mark the character's passage, underlining her resilience and what it cost her to acquire a sense of self-identity finally.

It is in this discussion that the intersection of cultural background, individual strength, and personal challenge shapes the journey of each protagonist. The symbols of water, olive trees, land, and family heirlooms serve as meaningful devices through which Nwapa and Abulhawa disclose a multi-layered comprehension of their characters' inner realities and their cultural selves. Such a comparative reading furthers text interpretation by offering insight into the powerful ways in which symbolic elements shape the distinct experiences of the protagonists.

Themes and motifs in *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin* explore similar themes and motifs. One recurring element is motherhood, and the protagonists' roles as mothers are used to reflect their larger quest for self-awareness, finding identity, and realizing the roles they have chosen for themselves. They are defined as women who represent motherhood; they are mothers in search of children. Resistance is also a theme frequently visited in both novels. It is a form of protest that is frowned upon in the different settings.

4.8 Conclusion

By comparing these two works, this chapter emphasizes a number of striking similarities but, at the same time, significant differences since both authors construe female self-discovery and self-realization against each other, while the novels emerge from totally different historical and cultural contexts. *Mornings in Jenin* and *Efuru* delve into female identity, agency, and resilience amidst a vast backdrop of political and cultural turmoil; two novels that go on to interrogate some conventional narratives about gender, power, and societal roles, highlighting the complex strategies women deploy to navigate and resist the limitations prescribed by the patriarchal norm, colonial histories, and foreign conflicts. The two novels illustrate the significant impact of cultural heritage on women's identity formation, and they chronicle the setbacks and triumphs that form parts of the struggles for autonomy these women go through as they take control of their lives against the forces of their marginalization and erasure. In any case, the related theme of self-discovery and actualization in these two novels is expressed with a different methodological approach to narrating the stories. Efuru's process stands in resistance to patriarchal expectations and spiritual traditions, sealed by transcending into Uhamiri, representing spiritual power and independence. Amal's journey to reconcile with her past and transcend by embracing death as a form of liberation for her and all Palestinians serves to portray some of the ways in which women can achieve agency and self-determination amidst great adversity.

General Conclusion

The marginalization of women, particularly in postcolonial societies, is deeply implicated with the historical legacies of colonialism. In colonized countries, the impacts of such historical

events still affect women through their subordination under both patriarchy and a postcolonial structure. Such women have to suffer from compounded marginalization as they go through this complex interrelationship of gender inequities sustained by the patriarchy and the continued impacts of colonial subjugation. Hence, the quest for identity in societies like these cannot be an indulgence in personhood; rather, it serves as a rebellion against the functioning forces which attempts to conform people into becoming the same. The quest for identity has become a strong trend in literature, serving as a means of articulating concerns, raising awareness, and challenging the enduring influences of patriarchy and colonial legacies. However, the process of forming one's identity is complex and multi-layered, shaped by the interrelated dimensions of historical trauma, societal conventions, and gendered expectations. In these contexts, women have to thread through various complexities on the way to their self-realization and empowerment.

One of the major tendencies in postcolonial literature is identity formation since many works focus on the close processes of self-discovery under harsh conditions of colonial and patriarchal oppression. Among those, works such as *Efuru* by Nwapa and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa show just how difficult women's paths may be in search of their self-definition. The psyche, according to psychological thought, is the origin of all decisions, actions, and behaviour; hence, identity formation is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the individual. Before an overall understanding of one's identity is reached, a complex mental processes exists that often prove complex and contradictory. Self-formation, however, is a far more complex process when framed against the backdrop of postcolonial and patriarchal societies. Works like these raise some fundamental questions about the growth of female identity within different and often unforgiving contexts.

The purpose of this Thesis was to discuss and compare the psychological presentation of female self-identity in African and Palestinian American literature through case studies in *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa. One of the major themes in Efuru and *Mornings in Jenin* is female identity; besides, it has been fully analyzed from the point of view of postcolonial theory, feminism, and their intersection, in addition to psychoanalysis with respect to the processes of identity construction, self-discovery, and trauma. The novelty and the importance of our research lie in the choice of these approaches, which are indispensable to the study because

of their multidisciplinarity, which offers a stronger and more comprehensive understanding of the concept under investigation.

From a social perspective, both Nwapa and Abulhawa are depicted as subordinate, secondary, expendable, and replaceable, in sharp contrast to the positive attributes generally ascribed to men. In light of the status accorded to them by society, women suffer an identity crisis, critically questioning the existing system and striving to break themselves free from the chains of the patriarchal binary system. The development of an independent female ego can only be possible when women develop an acute sense of self-consciousness. Their state of identity crisis, instead of being an unsurpassable barrier, is a transitional phase that helps create a well-defined identity. Women can evolve from a searching-identity state into a found-identity state. Put differently, though the perceptions in society have traditionally shaped women's identities, they are active agents with the power to challenge and reshape such perceptions to define their own identity.

Nwapa and Abulhawa wrote of female identity in response to the patriarchal systems that existed in their cultures. Generally, postcolonial literature and feminism have developed to critique and defy repressive, discriminatory systems. The authors were driven to query and set right the inimical portrait of the female, dictated by a culture controlled by males and sexist. They sought to focus attention, through their literature, on female inequality, reveal the workings of patriarchy, and propose ways for overcoming marginalization and social division.

The sociocultural environments of Amal and Efuru are influential in the process of female self-awareness and self-realization, as reflected in the novels. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* narrates the journey of the protagonist in self-discovery, which is affected by societal expectations and an internal struggle. Efuru is shaped by the patriarchal framework of her Nigerian community, where her worth is often measured by being a good mother and wife, hindering her personal growth. Despite these limitations, Efuru gradually shows her independence; she becomes a convolution of self-awareness and self-actualization.

On the other hand,Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* is a novel about Amal's pursuit of self-actualization against the background of dispossession, war, and exile in Palestine. In a complex manner, her life twists around the historical and political contingencies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it is her identity that gives shape to her pursuit of self-understanding in the world. Both these journeys point toward the intricate linking between personal identity and the

broad influences of a sociocultural landscape and the underlined difficulties in claiming one's agency and identity within an oppressive context.

In these two novels, the conditions found by each of the protagonists echo larger issues in women from Palestine and Nigeria and perhaps even in most postcolonial contexts around the world. *Efuru* by Nwapa portrays the residual effects of colonialism and marginalization by patriarchy faced by the women of Nigeria. Societal expectations of her constantly wear Efuru down; however, her willful determination to state her identity challenges the given order of her society.

Similarly, Amal's story in *Mornings in Jenin* expresses the depth of struggles faced by Palestinian women while negotiating political oppressions, displacements, and overwhelming losses of family and home. Amal's journey into self-discovery is inseparably woven into the collective struggle of Palestinian women fighting for their rights, identity, and dignity. In both novels, the protagonists' struggles for self-identity are much affected by some principal social and political conflicts; these thus support how personal transformation is motivated by collective memory and resistance.

Cultural and historical backgrounds largely predetermine Efuru and Amal's ways of self-realization. Cultural standards of Nigerian society dictate her struggle in the case of Efuru: insisting on getting married, begetting children, and performing some parental functions. The historical setting of colonialism in Nigeria gives her struggles an added dimension, as she is battling not only with gender-based oppression but also the strong influences of colonial rule, even as time keeps changing and defining the ways society views it. In *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal comes of age together with the historical trauma of Palestinian displacement. Growing up in the refugee camp while developing skills to engage with the complications of exile, loss, and the search for justice is the political context in which her identity development ensues within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is at this juncture of converging historical and cultural elements within the two novels that the correspondence of identity formation takes place to the socio-political contexts of their respective societies so profoundly.

Through characters, symbols, and story structure, Flora Nwapa and Susan Abulhawa demonstrate how love, relationships, and motherhood shape the main character's journeys to becoming self-aware and realizing who they are. Nwapa uses the figure of Efuru to talk about love

and motherhood in Efuru, especially in terms of a woman's sense of self-worth. While the relationships, whether familial or romantic, play a huge part in the composition of Efuru, they also play roles that include being causes of her stress and pathways by which she acquires self-understanding. She realized, however, an important step towards realizing herself: love for children, or her state of motherhood and being able to enact motherly roles well, did not define her any longer.

Another tool of expression that Abulhawa uses in *Mornings in Jenin* to expose how the search for the self is combined with love, relationships, and motherhood is the figure of Amal. Through her interactions, and importantly with her parents and her daughter, she learns to see herself and the world around her. The story navigates through the different generations to prove how love and family ties have shaped the identity of women with a lot of pain and displacement in the past. Symbols like the olive tree have been used to represent themes of loss and being rooted.

The purpose of this research was to trace the path of female self-awareness and self-realization in the novels *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa. More particularly, we have focused our attention on social, historical, and psychological conditions that shape the identities of protagonists in both novels. From our findings, both Efuru and Amal prove competent enough to manage themselves through complex patriarchy intertwined with colonial struggles and the pains of war. Still, the challenges within which their stories unfold would ensure life-altering experiences to bring the two protagonists to the milestones of self-realization finally. It proves that women, even within the most oppressive of societies, have an active creation of identities for themselves, struggling against their assigned roles. Through complex characterization, symbolism, and narrative structure, Nwapa and Abulhawa unwind the interlaced relationships among love, parenthood, and self-realization.

This research contributes to the discussion of postcolonial literature, feminist studies, and psychoanalysis by offering a comparative insight into female self-awareness and self-realization in two landmark African and Palestinian literary works. The current research combines psychoanalytic theory with postcolonial and feminist perspectives to explain in detail the psychological process of forming female identity, a subject largely avoided in earlier studies. It further points out the importance of cultural and historical contexts to the shaping of the courses

of women's identity in postcolonial societies, offering new insights into the juncture of individual and communal challenges.

This Thesis has focused on two specific texts; however, further research could easily be extended by including other works of authors from Africa and the Middle East that also express female identity in a postcolonial setting. A complete review of trauma and displacement and their impact on female identity within the diasporas could bring forward important insights into the lives of women in exile. Further research might explore how digital literature and today's media affect the narratives of female self-realization, especially in postcolonial contexts where attitudes toward gender roles are rapidly changing.

Finally, The stories we have been living shaped our narratives. Each community has developed a special way of narrating its history. These stories give voice to the needs, wants, hopes, and despairs of the society from which the stories originate and their struggles and fears. They influence the ways we conceptualize the world and the people surrounding us. They fire curiosity in learning, experiencing, loving, resisting, and re-imagining. Everybody has a right to tell his or her story.

This study, therefore, examines the dynamic sites of intersection between gender, identity, and cultural resistance in postcolonial literature. The research draws most heavily on the postcolonial and feminist theories that have helped analyze the texts, revealing various correlations involving colonialism, gender roles, and self-actualization. The writings of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* are outstanding in providing an insight into women's strength in the face of colonialism, patriarchy, and cultural shift.

In the case of *Efuru*, an analysis was made concerning Flora Nwapa's critique of the colonial and patriarchal imposition of women's roles in pre- and colonial West Africa. The story by Nwapa narrates the development of gender identities, the shifting borders between tradition and modernity, and the tenacity of women who defy and negotiate such constraints. The novel is a powerful portrayal of African feminism, relating a hopeful story of self-empowerment in a postcolonial milieu. Through figures such as Efuru, Nwapa renews womanist assertion with the highlight on women's agency and right to self-identity, deconstructing the patriarchal values that seek to define their existence.

Meanwhile, *Mornings in Jenin* describes the Palestinian struggle for self-definition and survival by three female protagonists: Dalia, Amal, and Sarah- all destined to suffer intergenerational trauma, patriarchal norms, and relocation. Set in a deeply inscribed legacy of colonialism, the psychic lesions of exile within the Palestinian experience begin a broader recording of Palestinian experiences in terms of women's continued resistance against persecution and strong resilience in the face of persecution. The story underlines how female identities come into being through rebellion, memory, and the rebuilding of parental authority. Most of all, intergenerational trauma has raised to the fore the critical role that women's experiences play in healing and continuity within the Palestinian diaspora.

Major similarities and differences emerge in the portrayal of female self-discovery and agency when the two works are compared against drastically different historical and cultural backgrounds. Thus, both works contest and interrogate dominant discourses on gender, societal roles, and power dynamics. However, while sharing this common trait, their approach is different in the way self-realization and resistance are configured: Efuru navigates between patriarchal expectations and spiritual transcendence, while Amal seeks her liberation by way of reconciliation with the past and going back to deep roots with her cultural heritage. Taken together, these stories throw light on various ways in which women reclaim their identities along lines of difference, adding to a greater discursive field of gender, cultural identity, and postcolonial resistance. Focussing on two different postcolonial settings and women's intimate experiences, the present study has brought into view an ongoing negotiation with cultural legacy and the fights for autonomy where women resist and transform the forces of marginalization and erasure.

This present thesis finally demonstrates how the road to self-determination and female resilience is still fundamental within the women's narrative in postcolonial literature, proving their capacity for identification within, against, and beyond oppressive structures and colonial legacy. Critical analyses of such texts prove that literature is indeed a strong tool for cultural reclamation and gendered resistance, opening new avenues of self-expression and agency in a rapidly changing world.

Morning in Jenin by Susan Abulhawa is a poignant tale of uprooted, dispossessed, and dehumanized Palestinians caught in the throes of four generations of the struggle of the Abulheja family through love, war, death, destruction, dispossession, and desolation brought on by one of

the most unsolvable conflicts of our time, the Israel-Palestine conflict. The greatness of the attempt by Abulhawa at deconstructing the Western narrative of the conflict, which is distorted to serve the interest of the oppressor, is the provision of an indigenous account of the same, which is often marginalized and excluded from the larger discourse. She presents another way of looking at the struggle by turning upside down the narrative that prosecutes victims and using language to the advantage of the oppressed. She uses counter-storytelling as a decolonial practice to oppose the colonial representation of Palestinian people and their identity. "Stories contribute at once to the (re)production of a particular genre of humanity and of its spaces of subaltern, decolonial resistance" (Glynn & Cupples, 2022, p. 16). In a similar stance Sium and Ritskes (2013) argue that "Stories not only serve to reproduce native traditions and knowledge production, but they also work against the colonial epistemic frame to reproduce possibilities and spaces of resistance" (p. 13).

On the other hand, Flora Nwapa was among the forerunning African writers who used writing as a means of restoring the damaged African identities caused by colonization. She wished to give African women a real voice since they had been under-represented in both colonial and postcolonial literature. Stereotypes imposed by colonial and patriarchal discourses were contested in Nwapa's literature. She saw writing as a strong, powerful and effective tool for change of outlook, which causes social change by allowing African women to express their complexity and agency. She used the pen as her means of protest against the destruction of African culture, history, and women. She wanted to highlight the lives of African women living under patriarchal and colonial rule as people in control of their destiny, even within the confinements of restrictive societal expectations. She tells the story of *Efuru* where she narrates womanhood, gender roles, and societal changes in postcolonial Nigeria, especially within the traditional Igbo society. Nwapa criticizes those colonial influences which relegated African women to the background, using Efuru's experiences in love, marriage, and motherhood to criticize patriarchal representations of women. With this story, she presents another version of African womanhood, focusing on the junction of tradition, modernity, and gender within a postcolonial setting. Nwapa's work provides a decolonial counternarrative that runs against colonial conceptions of African women as submissive and passive instead stresses their active roles. Her writing gives voice to traditional African wisdom, making room for the full realization of African womanhood and resisting colonial erasure.

This research while working on it has really deepened my consciousness of how literature can be used not just to reflect the ills of society but also as a means for social change. Both *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin* portray women acting with agency amidst impossible challenges. To me, the strength of writing gives voice to some of the most marginalized. I am very much aware that self-realization stories have powerful effects both intra-academically and as tools for inspiring change and self-determination in applied settings.

Although this research adds to the knowledge of female self-awareness and self-realization in *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, there are a number of limitations that should be noted. First, the comparative angle between these two novels, one in postcolonial Nigeria and the other in Palestine, while very revealing, is limited by the broad cultural, historical and political differences between these two contexts. Because the realities confronting women in these two regions are so starkly divergent, direct comparisons, in particular when it comes to how women resist patriarchal control and realize themselves, are rather difficult to draw. Thus, future studies could expand on these limitations through inclusion of more texts, interdisciplinary lenses and broader interpretations of female subjectivity across postcolonial literature.

In addition, health issues throughout the research prolonged the writing stage and reduced the time bedspread for a more thorough review of secondary literature. Although resources available could be used to benefit the study, nor all sources were equally accessible, particularly those in languages other than English, which limited the number of theoretical frameworks that could be brought to the analysis. As well as limiting the depth of certain sections, such as the final comparative analysis and ideas synthesis, these health issues had an impact on all sorts of things.

Finally, the study still offers a concentrated analysis of female self-empowerment and self-realization in *Efuru* and *Mornings in Jenin*, revealing the ways in which women explore their identities in the shadows of cultural, colonial and patriarchal powers. We encourage future research that considers more texts, more perspectives and interdisciplinary frames of analysis.

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Glossary

Alien: is an act or a process whereby people become foreign to the world that they live in or belong to. It also refers to a low degree in integration, a rejection of social values and a state of isolation, withdrawal from society, a state of despair, anguish, failure, weakness and disappointment. One can notice that persons can be alienated even from themselves and not only from society. It is important to note the literary meaning and use of alien, alienated or alienation.

Assumptions: are beliefs or ideas that we hold to be true, often with little or no evidence required things are assumed, supposed or taken for granted. They are manifest to an individual that are perceptible

Cartesian: relating to René Descartes and his philosophy, which emphasized the use of reason as the path to knowledge and the distinction between mind and body.

Collective memory: Maurice Halbwachs' concept of collective memory insists that remembering is a product of the social group rather than the individual. According to Halbwachs, our memories are framed by the various groups to which we have belonged, such as family, religious, or national groupings with their common view of the past. This is because collective memory gives continuity to societies, constructs identities, and grants a sense of belonging through the shared narratives.

Conflict triangle resolution: theorist John Paul Lederach terms the "conflict triangle." John Paul Lederach (born 1955) is an American Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and concurrently Distinguished Scholar at Eastern Mennonite University. He has written widely on conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution.

Consanguineal: refers to something related to blood relationships or kinship by descent. It comes from the Latin word consanguineous, which means "of the same blood."

Diaspora: coming from dispersion, it refers to a group of people who live outside the area in which they had lived for a long time or in which their ancestors live. Diaspora is the result of many consequences, such as colonialism, wars, slavery, famine, checking for jobs …etc.

Dibia: In Igbo culture, a Dibia refers to a traditional healer, spiritual practitioner, or diviner with knowledge of herbal medicine, ritual practices, and ancestral healing methods. The Dibia plays a

crucial role in diagnosing and treating physical, mental, and spiritual ailments through indigenous techniques, including the use of medicinal plants, rituals, and spiritual guidance.

Discourse: is a body of text that is either written or spoken, it means to communicate specific data, information, knowledge in which meaning is a collaborative construction involving author, text, culture and reader.

Ethnocentric: characterized by or based on the attitude that one's own group is superior, The belief that one's own group is superior to others, often leading to the interpretation of the world through the values of one's own cultural group.

Eurocentric: centered on Europe or the Europeans, especially: reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences

Exile: means to be away from some one's home, by either being explicitly refused permission to return or being threatened with imprisonment or death upon return. It can be a form of punishment and solitude. Terms such as diaspora and refugee describe group exile either voluntary or forced. Exile can refer to a sense of loss and displacement from a traditional homeland, particularly through such processes as colonization and modernization.

Existentialism: a chiefly 20th century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad.

Foucauldian: relating to, or characteristic of the philosophy of Michel Foucault, particularly his ideas about power, knowledge, and social institutions.

Hegemony: preponderant influence or authority over others ,domination of the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.

Heterogeneity: the quality or state of consisting of dissimilar or diverse elements the quality or state of being heterogeneous such as cultural heterogeneity.

Heterosexuality: sexual attraction with a person of the opposite sex.

Homogeneity: the quality of consisting of parts or people that are similar to each other or are of the same type such as cultural or racial homogeneity.

Homosexuality: sexual attraction to people of the same sex.

Hybridity: refers to the interaction, integration and mingling of cultural signs, characteristics, and practices from two different and distinct cultures: the colonizer and colonized cultures. The difference is in terms of many issues; language, customs, traditions, religion. Therefore, this interaction results new reconfiguration of both of the colonizer and the colonized.

Ideology: a belief-system that include a wide range of opinions, visions and ideas. This belief is held by an individual, group or society. It determines the way people view and conceive themselves and culture. In colonial projects, the colonizers follow the ideology of civilizing mission to justify their actions in the colonized countries. In feminist theory, the term male ideology is used, by many theorists, to refer to a system of oppressive and false conceptions about the female experience.

Indigenous: of, relating to, or descended from the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized.

Manichean: Pertaining to Manichaeism, an ancient dualistic religion, and more generally describing a worldview that divides concepts or people into two opposing categories of good and evil, with no shades of gray in between.

Mimic Men: Refers to individuals or groups that imitate or emulate the behaviors, characteristics, or values typically associated with men, often in a way that lacks authenticity or is driven by external pressures.

Negofeminism: A form of African feminism that emphasizes negotiation and compromise. Introduced by African feminist Obioma Nnaemeka.

Negritude: a consciousness of and pride in the cultural and physical aspects of African heritage the state or condition of being a Black person.

Oedipus complex: the positive libidinal feelings of a child toward the parent of the opposite sex and hostile or jealous feelings toward the parent of the same sex that in Freudian psychoanalytic theory may be a source of adult personality disorder when unresolved.

Other: the Other is anyone who is considered or viewed as different from the self. The existence of the Other is crucial in defining what is normal and in locating one's own place in the world. While the colonized is deemed as Other through establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the superiority of the colonizing culture, men on the other hand othered women by putting themselves as the 'One' and claiming women 'Otherness'.

Otto Rank: was an influential psychoanalyst and therapist who was originally a close collaborator of Sigmund Freud. He is known for his contributions to psychology, especially in the areas of existential psychology and the role of the birth trauma in human development.

Pathological: Referring to behaviors, conditions, or processes that are abnormal or indicative of disease or mental disorder. Often used to describe actions or traits that are excessive, irrational, or unhealthy, typically suggesting an underlying psychological or physical issue.

Patina: an appearance or aura that is derived from association, habit, or established character.

Patriarchal: an assumption held by feminist criticism that society and culture are dominated rather with traditions so structured by the prescription of the nature, to promote masculine values, status, and to maintain the male in a privileged position and subordinate women.

Phallocentric: a perspective that is highly predominated or exclusively male.

Psychopathology: The study of psychological and behavioral dysfunctions, particularly in relation to mental illness or social disorganization.

Psychotherapy: A treatment for mental health issues that involves psychological techniques, with the aim of improving a person's emotional and psychological well-being.

Rhetoric: The art of effective or persuasive communication, often through speech or writing.

Stereotype: are false or misleading generalizations about groups held in a manner that is defined as relatively fixed. They generally focus on negative and unfavorable characteristics.

Subaltern: a person holding a subordinate and weak position that follows immediately from a universal. It is used to refer to those groups in society who are subject to hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include humans of very low rank, everybody who has limited or no access at all to the cultural imperialism is thus subaltern. The term has been adapted to Post colonial

studies, Gayatri Spivak points that speaking is a transaction between speaker and listener, but it does not reach the dialogue level of utterance.

Subconscious: the mental activities just below the threshold of consciousness, existing in the mind but not immediately available to consciousness.

Therapy: medical treatment of impairment, injury, disease, or disorder.

Third Force in Psychology: Refers to humanistic psychology, which emerged as an alternative to psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Humanistic psychology focuses on human potential, personal growth, self-actualization, and the belief in free will. Key figures include Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who emphasized positive human qualities and the capacity for self-improvement

Transgression: the fact of transcending borders and challenging the norms that are morally and legally acknowledged limits to be respected.

unconscious: free from self-awareness. the part of mental life that does not ordinarily enter the individual's awareness yet may influence behavior and perception or be revealed (as in slips of the tongue or in dreams)