Nonviolent Modes of Resistance in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and *Against the Loveless World*

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Abstract: The paper explores the theme of non-violent resistance in two powerful novels by the American-Palestinian writer, Susan Abulhawa: *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) and *Against the Loveless World* (2020). Both novels provide poignant narratives of Palestinian women navigating the complexities of life under occupation, and their journeys reveal various forms of non-violent resistance as a response to oppression and adversity. In *Mornings in Jenin*, the characters' resilience is showcased through acts of cultural preservation, cultural expression, and the "ethic of love". Despite enduring the harsh realities of displacement, the protagonist Amal and her family cling to their Palestinian identity and heritage as a form of non-violent resistance. Additionally, the novel portrays the power of storytelling and memory in preserving the Palestinian narrative, thus countering the erasure of their history. Similarly, *Against the Loveless World* delves into the life of Nahr, a Palestinian woman whose journey from refugee camps to prison is marked by several forms of resistance to oppression. Nahr's resistance is manifested in recreating and rediscovering the self, celebrating traditions, finding genuine love, and teaching resistance to others. Both novels emphasize the importance of women's voices and agency in the Palestinian struggle, highlighting the role of women as key agents of change and resilience. The paper draws from the works of Edward Said, Ghassan Kanafani, Gramsci, Michel de Certeau, Stuart Hall, Bell Hook among others.

Keywords: Against the Loveless World, Mornings in Jenin, non-violent resistance, Palestinian heritage, Susan Abulhawa

1. Introduction

In his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon, in the inaugural chapter titled "On Violence," unequivocally posits that what he terms "national liberation" or "national resistance" is both legitimate and inherently violent (2007: 1, 30). Fanon contends that violent decolonization, depicted as "reeking of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives" (p. 3), emerges as a natural reaction to the brutality inflicted upon the bodies and minds of the colonized. Notably, Fanon excludes colonized intellectuals from this praxis, as they are often exploited by the colonialist bourgeoisie, who turn to them only when they perceive that "it is impossible to maintain its domination over the colonies." Consequently, cultural resistance is not accorded primacy in Fanon's worldview.

Edward Said's resistance project resonates with Fanon's framework to some extent. Said advances the idea of liberation as the "transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness" (Ashcroft 1999: 111). Combining

Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" with his perspective of language as an illusion, Foucault's notion of the "discursive formation of power," and Gramsci's understanding of culture as shaped by social hegemony, Said formulates a unique perspective that deviates from Fanon's confrontational and violent resistance. Said's body of work, including *Orientalism*, *The World, The Text, and the Critic*, *Culture and Imperialism*, and *The Representation of the Intellectuals*, represents a call for systematic cultural resistance through various intellectual representations, cultural forms, and counter-narratives. For Said, "power operates in knowledge," and he emphasizes the intricate relationship between literary texts and the political, social, and cultural realms. As he eloquently puts it in "The Representation of the Intellectuals," "Speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism; it is carefully weighing the alternatives, selecting the right one, and intelligently representing it where it can be most effective in driving meaningful change."

However, while opposing the other, Said's approach to resistance avoids exclusion. Drawing from Gadamer and Derrida's differential hermeneutics, Said advocates for a resistance that transcends cultural exclusionism (Manoochehri 147-48). He emphasizes that culture is often aggressively associated with the nation or the state, leading to differentiation between "us" and "them," frequently tinged with xenophobia (Said 1994a: xiii). For Said, true liberation and emancipation entail a universal self-conception, uniting the self and the other (Ashcroft 1999: 115). Instead of cultural rejection, Said advocates for harmonious coexistence with the other:

Said's strategy for resistance encapsulates a two-fold process, reminiscent of the two phases of decolonization outlined in "Culture and Imperialism." The initial phase involves the recovery of "geographical territory," followed by the subsequent phase of "changing of cultural territory." Thus, primary resistance, entailing "fighting against outside intrusion," is succeeded by secondary resistance, involving ideological or cultural reconstitution. Resistance, according to Said, becomes a process "in the rediscovery and repatriation of what had been suppressed in the natives' past by the processes of imperialism" (Ashcroft 1999: 107-108). Said's paradigm of resistance, therefore, contributes to narratives of liberation, freedom, hope, and love.

At the Palestinian level, Ghassan Kanafani stands as a pioneer, coining the term "resistance literature." His work, particularly "Adab al-muqawama fi Filastin al-muhtalla" (Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine) and "Fi al-adab al-sahyuni" (On Zionist Literature), underscores the significance of literature as a tool of resistance. Kanafani recognized the role of popular literature and the culture of everyday experience emanating from people's consciousness (1981: 23).

Stuart Hall, a prominent cultural theorist, and Michel de Certeau, a key figure in cultural studies, have made significant contributions to the understanding of non-violent resistance and postcolonialism. While their works span various aspects of cultural studies and social theory, their ideas can be connected to these themes.

Stuart Hall's definition of culture as "whatever is distinctive about the 'way of life' of a people, community, nation, or social group" underscores the role of cultural productions such as literature and art in shaping shared meanings and

representations of the world (1997: 2). Similarly, Michel de Certeau focuses on the everyday, emphasizing habits, routines, rituals, and practices as "ways of operating." He distinguishes between strategies, wielded by those in power, and tactics, employed by individuals to “create certain freedoms” within the cultural framework (Blauvelt 2003: 60). De Certeau's ideas, initially conceived in the context of capitalist consumer culture, apply to various forms of cultural resistance. As he puts it, “We are concerned with battles or games between the strong and the weak, and with the 'actions' which remain possible for the latter” (p. 34).

Stuart Hall's work on cultural identity and representation, notably in “The Question of Cultural Identity” (1993), provides insights into non-violent resistance in the context of postcolonialism. Hall argues that cultural identity is not fixed but constructed, and it is through discourse that dominant ideologies maintain control. In postcolonial settings, non-violent resistance often takes the form of challenging these dominant narratives and reasserting marginalized voices. Hall's emphasis on the power of discourse and cultural politics underpins the strategies of non-violent resistance in postcolonial contexts.

Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2002) offers a different perspective. De Certeau examines how individuals navigate within systems of power and control. He introduces the concept of "tactics" as subtle, everyday forms of resistance, often employed by marginalized groups. In postcolonial contexts, these tactics may manifest as subversive cultural practices, such as storytelling, graffiti, or subaltern languages, which challenge colonial norms without resorting to violence.

Susan Abulhawa, a Palestinian-American writer and human rights activist, has made substantial contributions to this discourse. Known for her novels, including *Mornings in Jenin*, *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, and *Against the Loveless World*, Abulhawa's work has been translated into numerous languages, solidifying her status as one of the most widely read Palestinian authors. Her motivation to write about the Palestinian crisis stemmed from her visit to the Jenin refugee camp following the Israeli massacre in April 2002. However, her focus shifted as she embarked on writing, prioritizing the human struggles of her characters within the brutal colonial reality (Qabaha 2019: 5). Abulhawa, like Said and Fanon, recognizes the power of the novel in decolonization and the reclamation of stolen Palestinian heritage through narrative and art. She believes that novels have a role in forging connections and fostering mutual understanding among people, transcending narrow categorizations such as European, Muslim, American, or Arab (Abulhawa 2017). This paper explores Abulhawa's nonviolent cultural resistance in two of her novels, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) and *Against the Loveless World* (2020). It delves into the various tactics and everyday experiences, drawing from de Certeau and Hall, that Abulhawa employs as responses to oppression and adversity.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, the resilience of characters like Amal and her family is portrayed through acts of cultural preservation, cultural expression, and what can be termed the “ethic of love.” Despite enduring the harsh realities of displacement, they steadfastly cling to their Palestinian identity and heritage, representing a form

of nonviolent resistance. The novel underscores the power of storytelling and memory in preserving the Palestinian narrative, countering attempts to erase their history.

Similarly, *Against the Loveless* World explores the life of Nahr, a Palestinian woman whose journey from refugee camps to prison is marked by unwavering resistance to oppression. Nahr's resistance is characterized by her refusal to conform to societal norms, her unyielding pursuit of justice, and her deep commitment to her Palestinian heritage. Both novels highlight the pivotal role of women's voices and agency in the Palestinian struggle, emphasizing women as crucial agents of change and resilience.

2. Forms of non-violent resistance in *Mornings in Jenin*

2.1 Heritage, memory, and Sumud

From the beginning of *Mornings in Jenin*, whose original title was *The Scar of David* the first time it was published, Abulhawa emphasizes the Palestinian heritage, a heritage that she describes as belonging to “before history” (11). Abulhwa views Palestinian tradition as deeply rooted in the land, which existed before Nakba and Naksa, the events that “shattered present and future.”

The nostalgic memory of Abulhija family that Abulhawa depicts includes a lot of folklore and tradition: Palestinian ballads, lentils and Makloobeh dishes, A Qura’an that belongs to grandfathers and Wudu and Salat rituals, etc. To show its originality and belonging to the land's owners, Abulhawa included the history of things that existed before the Nakba and still exist today.

Nasser and Heacock believe that the idea of Sumud (steadfastness) started in 1967 (1990: 28). However, Abulhawa tries to show that this cultural value is deeply rooted in the blood of the Palestinians before the Six-Day War and Nakba and even history itself. Attachment to the land is a timeless value for them. Rijke and van Teeffelen believe that “Sumud was found to represent the struggle to persevere in a colonial context, protecting dignity, preserving Palestinian identity and a Palestinian way of life; emphasizing humanity, freedom, care and justice, and a strong determination to remain on the land” (qtd in Hammad and Tribe 2020: 134). Sumud in the form of clinging to the land, as the director of the Bethlehem-based NGO Wi’am comments, “has been part of the non-violent struggle of the Palestinian people against the colonial presence in this land. (…) [W]ith relentless persistence, we remained here. I am here to stay. You cannot uproot me. I am like the cactus. Even when the environment is dry I can live” (qtd. in Johansson & Vinthagen 2020: 149).

There are fig, olive, and grape trees that symbolize this long-lasting heritage, but olive trees are the most emblematic. “The olive tree with its deep roots in the land, bearing fruits only after several years of growth, became a widely used metaphorical expression of sumud” (Rijke and Teeffelen 2014: 87). In the novel, “Old Lady,” which is a fifteen-hundred-year-old tree, becomes the ultimate symbol of heritage and Sumud. It is a timeless entity that “was here long before any of us, and she’ll be here long after we’re gone” (54). Olive trees and trees, in general, are viewed as “Samidin” human people who are loved, productive, and missed. The

novel's protagonist, Amal, tells her daughter Sara that "Old Lady" is more significant and has a longer history than Jerusalem's walls. (227). Amal fights for living things, not inanimate objects like walls and stones, but rather living beings like people and plants. This interpretation aligns with Zuhair and Awad's view that trees in *Mornings in Jenin* represent a "prism through which the reader perceives the sociopolitical and historical events" shaping the Palestinian experience (22). According to them, the deep-rooted olive trees, especially the "Old Lady" in the novel, symbolize the unbreakable connection between Palestinians and their land, mirroring their resilience in the face of displacement. As they note, "Just like the Old Lady, the fifteen-hundred-year-old olive tree, Palestinians are tightly connected to their lands despite relentless Israeli attempts to uproot them" (22).

When Abulhija family of Ein Hod, who belonged to forty generations and more, was displaced from Haifa and expelled to Jenin camp in 1948, Haj Yehya returned to his land and trees despite the many warnings. He went back to engage in the rituals of olive reaping and to reunite "with his family" (41). His homecoming to the land he cherished would ultimately result in his untimely demise, symbolizing the Palestinians' enduring desire to reclaim their homeland.

Not only is Haj Yehya a prominent figure of Sumud and resistance in the novel, but also his daughter-in-law Dalia, Amal's mother. Abulhawa selects Dalia as the ultimate embodiment of Sumud, as she not only conceives multiple times but also serves as a midwife, bringing new life to other children. It is intriguing to note that the name "Dalia" has its roots in Arabic, signifying "grapevine," while in Hebrew it represents a "slender branch" of grapes and olive tree. Regrettably, her second child, Ismael, was taken away by a jealous, childless Jew, symbolizing the tragic displacement of Palestinians from their homeland and the erosion of their cultural identity. As the parent of Ismael, she also represents the collective grief of the Arab community. When Ismael is abducted, amidst her thoughts of water and the encompassing dust, she transforms into a different embodiment of Hagar, symbolizing the anguish of loss, the essence of motherhood, and the unwavering resilience known as Sumud.

Towards the conclusion of the novel, despite the apparent tension between Dalia and Amal, Amal exhibits a similar level of resilience as her mother. Amal's ability to endure and persist is evident through her decision to give birth to her daughter Sara, as well as other children, and ultimately herself. By emulating her mother, Amal is able to reclaim her identity and shed the persona of the exiled and dismembered Amy of America. The novel concludes with Sara and her mother reconciling, creating a legacy of cultural preservation and resilience.

Throughout the novel, Sumud is a recurring theme that spans across different periods, including before the Nakba, during the Naksa and evacuation to Jenin camp, and after. This concept takes on various forms and is embodied by several characters, such as Amal, Yousef, Huda, Majid, Sara, and many others. They all carry with them the legacy and memories of Palestine, no matter where they go or what they do. Sumud is a form of resistance that is passed down from one generation to the next, and it involves living with uncertainty and the constant threat

of loss. It is a reminder that all Palestinians, including David/Ismael, Yousef, and Amal, bear both physical and psychological scars.

2.2 The ethic of love

In her essay titled "Love as the Practice of Freedom," Bell Hook emphasizes the necessity of an "ethic of love" in order to emancipate ourselves and bring about societal change (1994: 247-248). Love, in this context, serves as a socio-political strategy against oppression (Monahan 2011: 102), surpassing theological boundaries (p. 104). According to hook, individuals who resist domination are often driven by self-interest and seek not only the collective transformation of society but also an end to their personal suffering (1994: 244). hook provides a rationale for the importance of an ethic of love:

> This is why we desperately need an ethic of love to intervene in our self-centered longing for change. Fundamentally, if we are only committed to an improvement in that politic of domination that we feel leads directly to our individual exploitation or oppression, we not only remain attached to the status quo but act in complicity with it, nurturing and maintaining those very systems of domination. Until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle (p. 244).

In other words, a love ethic is the only way to expand our narrow center of attention to include others and achieve liberation. This love is not involuntary, but rather a deliberate choice for which one must take responsibility (Monahan 106). It is an action and an ongoing practice necessary for spiritual growth rather than simply a feeling (Monahan106-108). Moreover, this kind of love, which encompasses the other, does not entail sacrificing one's cultural and historical uniqueness (Monhan 109).

Love permeates every corner of Mornings in Jenin, manifesting itself in various forms such as romantic love, friendship, and sisterhood. The novel is replete with tales of romance, featuring couples like Hasan and Dalia, Yousef and Fatima, Amal and Majid, Huda and Osama, and many more. However, these relationships extend beyond mere romance, as each partner becomes a pillar of support and a safe haven for their significant other (p. 195). Friendship, particularly sisterhood, is also depicted as a profound expression of love in Abulhawa's work. Examples include the bond between Huda and Amal, Amal's connection with the girls at the Jerusalem orphanage, as well as her relationships with Elizabeth and Angela Haddad, among others.

The element of surprise in Amal's society and family does not stem from the types of love that are considered a form of resistance. Rather, it is the "ethic of love" that Abulhawa and her protagonist extend to the Jews in the novel that is truly astonishing. While Ari Prelstein's friendship with Hasan is not particularly shocking, given that it takes place before the Nakba, it is Amal's love for the occupiers - Jolanta, Moshe, and even the soldier who ultimately kills her - that truly

stands out. Abulhawa is attempting to convey a message of love, an ethic of love that acknowledges the suffering of others, including the Jews who were victimized by the Nazis and seeks to understand their vulnerability and humanity. By doing so, she avoids having double standards when it comes to dealing with people's hardships. Acknowledging the pain of others is not a betrayal, but rather a way of upholding the values of justice.

Ari's loyalty to his Palestinian friends and advocacy for their cause may lead to reciprocal love. This is exemplified by Moshe and Jolanta's guilt over stealing an Arab child and their decision to tell him the truth and allow him to choose his identity. This mutualism allows Ismael/David to reconcile his dual identity and work for the Palestinian cause. Abulhawa's concept of love is taken to an extreme by Amal, who loves the soldier trying to kill her as an innocent young man following orders. Abulhawa's philosophy aligns with Edward Said's call to embrace the other and move beyond nationalism, whether we agree or not.

Solidarity and advocacy serve as alternative forms of resistance in Abulhawa's novel. In various interviews, Abulhawa emphasizes the importance of solidarity, but not with countries like the US, which is depicted in the novel as blindly supporting Israel. The US not only turns a blind eye to the massacres inflicted upon the Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila but also enables them by spreading false information about a supposed truce. In her interview on Al-Jazeera titled “Confronting Anti-black Racism in the Arab World,” Abulhawa advocates for reciprocal solidarity with nations and peoples who support and stand with us, both in their hearts and through their actions. She emphasizes the importance of extending this solidarity beyond America and Europe (2013). This theme is reflected in the novel through characters such as Jack O’Malley who is described as an Irish Palestinian. By choosing this character, Abulhawa highlights the strong bond between Ireland and Palestine. O’Malley not only represents a friend of the Palestinians in the novel but also symbolizes the entire Irish people and nation, as well as other colonized and victimized nations around the world who deeply sympathize with the Palestinian cause. He is a man whose love and dedication are so profound that he is entrusted with secrets to be passed on to the next generation, such as the box containing Hasan's olive-wood smoking pipe, which he hands over to Amal. Ari can also be viewed from this perspective. As a victim and survivor of the holocaust who is true to the principles of justice, he too can stand in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The pinnacle of love is found at home. Amal, like her mother Dalia, was afraid to love her daughter Sara too deeply. As a defense mechanism, she hesitates to love the daughter who is “the point where all my love, my history, and my pain met in a perfect blossom, like a flower growing from a barren soil” (192). Amal believed that getting too close to Sara would ultimately result in losing her. However, it was not until the end of the novel, when Amal returned to Jenin camp, that she was able to open herself up to unconditional love for Sara. Together with Huda, the three women formed a bond of sisterhood and love that persisted even after Amal's passing. Huda became a surrogate mother and a guide to Sara as her name suggests.

Amal's acceptance of David grows stronger upon her return home too. She becomes more receptive to his hybrid identity and gains a deeper understanding of his position between two worlds. Simultaneously, David develops a greater love for himself as he embraces both his David and Ismael personas. They represent the shared pain endured by Palestinians and Jews, scarred by the actions of Zionists and Nazis. Following Amal's passing, David/Ismael becomes Sara's sole remaining family member. In a brilliant twist, Abulhawa brings Sara and Ismael together for the first time in history, as they visit Ein Hod and stand united in support of the Palestinian struggle. Meanwhile, Amal departs from this world in a state of love, devoted to her country and the other.

This notion of love as a form of resistance is also deeply embedded in Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015), where she draws on Shakespearean themes of love and tragedy. Yousef Abu Amrieh, in his analysis of the novel, suggests that Abulhawa appropriates motifs from Romeo and Juliet to explore how Palestinian love stories are transformed into tragedies by ongoing conflict and displacement. He argues that love in this novel is not merely romantic but is impacted by larger political forces, illustrating how wars and family pressures can turn love stories into sites of conflict and tragedy (Abu Amrieh 45). In this sense, the current study builds on Abu Amrieh's argument by emphasizing that in *Mornings in Jenin*, love—whether romantic, familial, or for the land—becomes a tool for enduring and resisting the brutality of the occupation. It is this ethic of love that allows the characters to hold onto their humanity in the face of dehumanizing forces.

2.3 Cultural expression in *Mornings in Jenin*

In *Mornings in Jenin*, education is portrayed as a significant cultural expression. After Abulhija family's traumatic experiences, Hasan recognized that education was the only way to overcome their struggles. Despite his father's objections, Hasan encouraged his siblings to pursue their education. Interestingly, Hasan's education was facilitated by a Jewish family who had fled from the horrors of Nazism. Mrs. Perlstein, Ari's mother, secretly provided Hasan with books and encouraged him to study. This act of educating someone from a different culture can be seen as an expression of love and compassion.

Education has not become stagnant for the Palestinians; rather, it is infused with love on numerous occasions. In the early mornings at Jenin camp, Hasan would teach his daughter Amal poetry by the gentle glow of a wax candle. Within that enchanting ambiance, Hasan would express his affection for his child through what he referred to as "magical words." Although Amal did not comprehend the verses of classical Arabic poetry recited by her father while cradled in his arms, the scent of tobacco from his olive-wood pipe, she cherished them just as she cherished her father. Unlike his own father, Hasan firmly believes that "[T]he land and everything on it can be taken away, but no one can take away your knowledge or the degrees you earn" (53). After losing her parents, Haj Salem and Ammo Jack O'Malley encouraged Amal to continue her education. They understood Hasan's message and their support resulted in Amal receiving a scholarship to study in

Pennsylvania, where she became an independent and intellectually empowered woman.

The act of Hasan engaging in cultural resistance by reading to his children, a practice that Amal later adopted with her daughter Sara, was also a tradition upheld by Haj Salim. Haj Salim would narrate stories to all the Palestinian children residing in the Jenin camp. He expressed his resistance through the retelling of memories and stories that were deeply rooted in Palestinian culture. One particular story he decided to share was about his experience as a furniture maker employed by the English, who had granted land to the Jewish community. Through his narratives, he aimed to serve as a witness, ensuring that people remained connected to their history. In his own words, he stated, “I have made an effort to utilize my intellect and emotions in order to maintain our people's connection to their past, preventing us from becoming forgetful beings subjected to injustice” (p. 110). Amal recounts his lively way of passing history to the children of the camp and describes him as “My treasure of Palestinian folklore and proverbs” (p. 66). Even Haj Salim joins in on the fun by mocking Israeli soldiers and their names. However, there is always something that escapes his narrative, something untold in the Palestinian memory that is in the urge to be told, such as the tragic tale of his family who was killed during the 1948 Nakba.

Some of these untold Palestinian stories that are repressed are sublimated into alternative modes of artistic expression. Due to the numerous traumas, they encounter in their struggle, Palestinians resort to aesthetic forms of expression. As an illustration, Yousef experienced the loss of his friend and neighbor, Jamal, who was brutally killed by Israeli soldiers as a means to intimidate other Palestinian youths. This tragic event rendered Yousef incapable of articulating his trauma through words. He found himself unable to convey to Jamal's mother the harsh reality that Jamal's life was sacrificed to exemplify the concept of an “example”: “I cannot tell her the child she carried, fed, and loved is buried inside a word which takes its new form from Jamal’s smile and big ears” (p. 85). In this particular instance, Yousef was not able to sublimate his trauma. However, there were other situations where Palestinians were able to channel their experiences into artistic expression. For Yousef, the sudden loss of his grandfather, who was killed by the Jews, brought immense grief, leading him to take up playing the nay. Moreover, after enduring the “dialects of torture” inflicted upon him by Israeli soldiers and experiencing the loss of his father in the war, he would rest his head on a pillow and imagine hearing his father's breath whispering the words of Rumi (84-85). Additionally, Huda's youngest son, Nasser, who was taken by the Jews at the age of six during the Intifada and lost his ability to speak, transformed his silence into painting and drawing graffiti on the walls of Jenin camp as a form of resistance.

Abulhawa's preference for cultural resistance and expression, rather than direct violence, is evident in the concluding chapter of the novel. Surprisingly, the reader learns that Yousef did not conduct a suicidal attack on the American embassy as revenge for the brutal killing of his wife and children in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Despite Abulhawa's persistent efforts to convince her readers of the legitimacy of his position and to evoke empathy, she portrays her characters as

unable to seek revenge through violent means. Instead, she chooses to conclude her story with the coexistence of educated individuals who are actively striving for the Palestinian cause.

Abulhawa describes Amal as a girl who escaped her destiny to become a "word, drained of its meaning" (p. 222). Similarly, Ismael's or David's scar also becomes a word that oozes with truth. Each scar in the book transforms into a word, a narrative, revealing a fragment of the truth. Even in death, Amal becomes a word, although this time not one of truth, but rather one that is concealed within sensationalized headlines in an unjust media outlet such as the American press (p. 245).

Sara assumed the responsibility of collecting the remaining words, scars, and tales of love in order to uncover the truth. She embarked on a career as a journalist for the renowned Al-Jazeera news agency. Alongside her cousin Jacob, Huda's son, Nasser, and her uncle David, they constituted a hybrid family- a blend of American, Israeli, and Palestinian backgrounds. Love gathered them and each one of them chose a cultural expression to stress their identity as advocates of the Palestinian struggle. Jacob pursued mathematics as his uncle Yousef, while Mansour delved into the realm of art. Sara, on the other hand, opted to become a journalist and established a Palestinian website. In her pursuit of defending her beliefs, Sara embraced a contemporary cultural expression by creating a website. David, being the first to contribute to it, eloquently expressed his hybrid identity as a novel form of Palestinian resistance.

3. Forms of non-violent resistance in *Against the Loveless World*

First and foremost, the title draws inspiration from a quote by the novelist James Baldwin. This choice holds significance on various levels. Initially, Abualhawa characterizes the world as devoid of love, thereby assigning centrality to the absence of love in her narrative discourse. This raises pertinent questions: what precipitates the disappearance of love in one's life, and in what context—whether personal, communal, or spiritual? Is the discourse centered around romantic love, love for one's homeland, or the broader spectrum of human love in its most universal manifestations? These inquiries constitute integral components of Abulhawa's discursive formations, warranting further exploration.

Another noteworthy aspect is James Baldwin's identity as an African American civil rights activist, renowned for his semi-autobiographical works exploring themes of race, politics, and sexuality. Does Abualhawa draw inspiration from Baldwin, particularly within the postcolonial framework through which we approach the novel? In this context, the convergence of racial and national dimensions becomes apparent, with white supremacy becoming intricately entwined with the broader imperialist project. This assumes greater significance given Abulhawa's identity as an Arab-American, directing her narrative towards a Western audience.

Another introductory consideration pertains to the myriad and intricate trajectories depicted in the novel. The protagonist, Nahr, undergoes a profoundly personal evolution from a marginalized outsider to a self-assured woman. However,

this journey assumes allegorical dimensions on various levels. Nahr appears to symbolize the Palestinian refugee or women in general. The settings she inhabits, spanning a refugee camp, Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, and the West Bank, where the return to the homeland acquires multifaceted dimensions, illustrate the parallelism between the personal and the allegorical on an ethnic or national level.

Furthermore, viewing Abualhawa through a feminist lens provides additional insight into the novel's themes. The oppression of women, particularly evident in Nahr's experience as a Palestinian refugee, takes on nuanced layers. Issues such as resistance against patriarchal dominance and self-assertion emerge prominently, as highlighted by Abulhawa in her interview with Rosenberg, where she articulates the feminist nature of her resistance:

> My resistance is also feminist in nature. It is a vegan lifestyle in opposition to industrialized animal cruelty. It is militant and does not under any circumstance accept Zionism as anything but a modern face of white supremacy, however multi-racial that face might be (Rosenberg 2021).

This is also most apparent from a bird-view look at Nahr’s life from the time she marries young and is abandoned by her husband after being subject to sexual assault – Abulhawa mentions sexual violence as the starting point of the novel (Rosenberg 2021) – to the time when she is lured into prostitution, up until she finds true love with Bilal.

To encapsulate, Nahr's narrative journey unfolds with manifold meanings. On a personal level, she grapples as an individual woman within a patriarchal milieu, seeking self-assertion and genuine love in a world fundamentally devoid of it. Simultaneously, her story resonates as an allegorical representation of the Palestinian people's journey since the Nakba of 1948—subject not only to the trauma of occupation and displacement but also the oppression faced as second-degree citizens bereft of basic rights in host countries, such as Kuwait and Iraq.

Transitioning to the focal theme of non-violent forms of resistance, the preceding observations are pivotal for discerning these forms within the narrative and comprehending their role and overall significance. Given the context elucidated earlier, these non-violent forms gain heightened importance, emanating from a woman navigating a harsh, loveless world. The non-violent forms, aligned with Edward Said's concept of secondary resistance through cultural reconstitution, merit specific attention. These forms include the act of writing itself, the rediscovery and recreation of the self, the celebration of traditions, the cultivation of genuine love, and the imparting of survival skills to others.

3.1 Space versus place

Before delving into the enumerated forms of resistance, an examination of the Space versus Place dichotomy in the novel is essential. The narrative commences both verbally and contextually with a reference to the cube: "I live in the cube." Notably, the cube, possessing six sides denoted as east, west, north, south, up, and down, serves as a unifying spatial metaphor, evident in the novel's subtitles. The cube assumes significance as a symbolic construct, a theme to be explored later. Crucially, the novel initiates within a confined and claustrophobic place—the

Israeli prison referred to by Nahr as the cube. As readers, are we intended to experience a sense of limitation? Certainly, in terms of place, Nahr is physically constrained. However, through her writing prowess, her mind transcends these spatial confines, navigating the infinite expanses of the mind and imagination.

The space created by and for Nahr reminds one of the in-between space of the encounter of the colonizer and colonized which Bhabha calls the third space of cultural enunciation which, in his view, deconstructs “the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge” (Bhabha 1995: 276). The colonized, in their struggle for liberation work within limited epistemological or discursive space since they are marginalized in the dominant discourse of the colonizer. So, this third space is integral to the cultural liberation or reconstitution project. As will be shown later, the act of writing is a form of resistance and self-assertion, which is not something new or peculiar to this novel. Writers all over the world used writing to fight against all forms of oppression.

The duality of place and space demands attention. Nahr inhabits the interstice between the physical and metaphysical, transcending categorizations such as corporeal vs. spiritual or material vs. immaterial. This duality is crucial for understanding non-violent forms of resistance, where deficiencies in the tangible realm often find compensation in parallel, immaterial domains. In situations of unjust imprisonment by occupiers, these immaterial forms of resistance assume heightened importance and immediacy.

Aligned with this notion, the spatial trajectory traced throughout the novel, constituting Nahr's biography and, perhaps, a semi-autobiographical account of Abualhawa, carries allegorical significance. Nahr's journey—from the refugee camp to Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine— mirrors the trajectory of every Palestinian refugee. Living in Kuwait symbolizes the struggle for livelihood in the post-war era, whether in 1984 or 1967. Refugees and their second generation contributed significantly to the development of Gulf countries, as exemplified by the establishment of the PLO in Kuwait. Economic improvement through hard work enabled them to turn their attention back to their homeland. Notably, not all were involved in the military struggle, yet all harbored the dream of returning home, passing it on to their descendants—Nahr being one of these refugees.

The loss of the homeland did not equate to the loss of culture, with its positive and negative elements and traditions. The pre-Nakba Palestinian society, predominantly rural with modernized city centers like Jafa, Jerusalem, and Haifa, was characterized by a patriarchal structure, particularly in rural or village areas. The hardships of poverty and displacement compounded the challenges faced by Nahr, who encountered oppression within her family and later, from her husband. This underscores the triple marginalization experienced by Palestinian women in the diaspora—based on gender, refugee status, and socioeconomic standing. Notably, the intersections of race and class warrant consideration in this context.

3.2 Writing as a form of resistance

A pervasive form of resistance woven into the narrative is the act of writing. As articulated by Nahr, her writing emanates from "an irrepressible instinct to account

for life" (Abulhawa 2020: 174). The act of accounting for life serves as a reaffirmation of the right to life. In the face of profound oppression, individuals are dehumanized, and their fundamental right to life is systematically denied. Nahr's assertion underscores the transformative power of writing—a means of documenting life, emphasizing survival, and preserving memory. This sentiment is vividly expressed in Nahr's interaction with the prison walls:

> The guards are accustomed to the conversations I have with the walls. I know I'm alone here. I'm not delusional. But the way memory animates the past is more real than the present. I see and feel and hear Jehad, Sitti Wasfiyeh, Mama, Baba. Most of all, I am with Bilal here (Abulhawa 2020: 33).

In the context of Nahr's life, writing serves as her fundamental defense within the cube—an embodiment of ultimate imprisonment and the deprivation of humanity. The alternating chapters between the present-day narrative within the cube and the recounting of Nahr's backstory underscore the dual role of writing: as a personal defense mechanism and a broader metaphor for asserting the historical rights of the colonized.

This discussion invokes the concept of the "regime of truth" and "discursive formations" introduced by Michel Foucault (2002). According to Foucault, truth is both a function and a product of discourse, shaped within a specific regime through various discursive formations. Consequently, resisting the dominant discourse necessitates engagement within it—either to dismantle it or create a counter space for resistance. Writing emerges as a crucial tool in this regard, being the most potent form of knowledge dissemination and truth production. Writing, encompassing both specific texts of history and culture, becomes indispensable for any liberation project, given the adversary's reliance on a regime of truth production.

3.3 Rediscovering and recreating the self as a form of resistance

Within the framework of resistance, the journey of rediscovering and recreating the self emerges as a foundational element, recognizing that communal resistance must necessarily commence with individual transformation. In Nahr's narrative, the imperative to rediscover and recreate herself becomes paramount, constituting a fundamental survival mechanism. This process unfolds gradually, affording her increasing agency and assertiveness. Examining the chronological spectrum from the inception to the culmination of Nahr's journey reveals a transformation from a victimized and passive girl to a liberated and free-spirited writer, underscored by an intermediary phase where she reconnects with her roots in Palestine and encounters genuine love.

While in Palestine, Nahr seizes the opportunity to explore her origins and undergoes a process of self-recreation, catalyzed by her profound connection with Bilal—the love of her life and soon-to-be husband. Bilal serves as her guide in resistance, imparting valuable lessons and exposing her to a life infused with love. Simultaneously, Bilal unveils the rich tapestry of her family history in Palestine. The question arises: how can this individual journey of self-discovery, seemingly esoteric in nature, be construed as a form of resistance?

In the face of communal annihilation orchestrated by the colonial cultural mechanism, every personal endeavor assumes significance. Individual self-discovery becomes a meaningful step toward a broader resistance. It is inherently a struggle for history and facts, countering the erasure sought by colonial forces. Moreover, as elucidated later, Nahr is not only engaged in her self-education but is also being prepared to serve as a teacher of resistance to those in her vicinity—an education that extends beyond herself to contribute to collective empowerment.

3.4 Celebrating traditions as a form of resistance

As previously mentioned, Nahr's return to the homeland stands as a pinnacle in her self-realization and emancipation on multiple fronts. Beyond discovering love and identity, she actively engages in social and political activism. Moreover, she dedicates time to cherishing the traditional facets of Palestinian culture. A notable episode in the novel portrays her involvement in the ancient tradition of olive picking—a vivid scene depicted in Abulhawa's lyrical prose:

> Bilal had already laid the tarps by the time we arrived. We got to work right away, toiling among those ancient trees as the sun inched along its arc. Amna taught me the proper way to pick olives. 'Some of the lazy boys try to just shake and hit the branches to make the olives fall, but that's wrong. My father says it's wrong to beat a tree that's giving you blessings. Do it like this,' Amna said, picking one olive at a time with rapid dexterity, letting them fall onto the tarp laid beneath the tree. The plop of hundreds of olives falling at once from the trees all around made music like rain from clear blue skies (Abulhawa 2020: 208).

Olive picking assumes particular significance as a hallmark of Palestinian life, symbolizing a profound connection with the land and serving as a means of survival within the household economy. Olive trees historically provided financial support, and this practice is intricately linked to the everyday life of Palestinians. Michel de Certeau's emphasis on the everyday, encompassing habits, routines, rituals, and practices, serves to "create certain freedoms" within cultural frameworks (Blauvelt 2003: 60). Shifting focus to traditional Palestinian life operates within this framework, offering a strategic means to counter the dominance of the modern colonizer's discourse, which often marginalizes folkloric, traditional, and agricultural elements in favor of the modern and industrial.

This act of resistance extends beyond the individual to become collective, as highlighted by Abulhawa:

> Palestinian society, in particular the fellaheen, collectively have a reverence, curiosity, and respect for trees that I've rarely seen in other societies. Israel has always understood this, as do their paramilitary settlers, which is why tree groves have been particular targets for their violence against us (Rosenberg 2021).

This sacred connection with trees and the land resonates with native struggles against colonizers, where the latter often employs cutting-edge technology (industry) that voraciously consumes native "nature." The act of celebrating

traditions becomes a poignant form of resistance against the erasure of cultural heritage and the imposition of a foreign narrative.

While trees still represent resilience, their significance is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, religious, and environmental dimensions. The current study incorporates this broader perspective to illustrate how trees in Abulhawa's works not only symbolize the Palestinian connection to the land but also serve as metaphors for enduring cultural values and collective memory, functioning as silent witnesses to human suffering and resilience. As Sadouni and Abu Amrieh in their analysis of trees in *The Stories Trees Tell* state, "Trees in these texts share cultural symbolism which includes religious aspects, historical values, and communities' distinctive traditions and customs" (p. 686). They argue that trees in Jad El Hage's *The Myrtle Tree* and Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* hold broader symbolic meanings that extend beyond national identity. This interpretation shifts the focus from trees as markers of a specific national or political struggle, as seen in *Mornings in Jenin and Against the Loveless World*, to a more expansive view where trees represent universal symbols of cultural and environmental survival.

3.5 Genuine love as a form of resistance and perseverance

Love, or its absence, stands at the heart of the novel, as reflected in the title. Therefore, the quest for love in all its forms becomes the unifying thread in the struggle to endure in a seemingly loveless world, or at the very least, to infuse it with life-affirming love. Nahr, as a young girl, faced multifaceted challenges as a refugee and a "subaltern" within her society, using Gayatri Spivak's terminology. Discovering or receiving genuine love proves to be a formidable challenge under such circumstances. Implicit in Nahr's ongoing struggle is a profound yearning for authentic love—a love that could compensate for the void left by her challenging childhood and forced first marriage. Considering the allegorical nature of her journey, this love, once found, transcends personal accomplishment. It is not merely the product of an individual quest but an integral part of the broader process of rediscovering the homeland.

This sentiment is palpable in Nahr's reflections on her relationship with Bilal throughout the novel, exemplified in passages like the following:

> It was natural to be in Bilal's company, away from the rest of humanity. I balanced myself with a hand on his shoulder; he had his arms poised to catch me again, until we reached a clearing near the top, on the side of the hill. He sat on the dirt under a large olive tree, its low branches extending from its knotted trunk (Abulhawa 2020: 126).

It is noteworthy how Bilal and the land of Palestine intertwine in Nahr's consciousness. He represents the tangible and physical connection with the land, the trees, and even the earth:

> I stumbled awkwardly through the unfamiliar milieu in Palestine, and Bilal was there to pick me up, sometimes literally (Abulhawa 2020: 129).

Here, Nahr implies that Bilal was not just physically supporting her but also emotionally and spiritually uplifting her. The boundary between what is physical and what is not becomes delicate. Their relationship serves as an educational and

consciousness-raising experience for Nahr, particularly given Bilal's past as a freedom fighter. He imparts a wealth of knowledge, including insights into different types of plants:

> Bilal taught me to identify individual plants we encountered, which usually had associated folklore, culinary uses, and medicinal value (Abulhawa 2020: 131).

Meeting Bilal becomes a crucial aspect of rediscovering roots in Palestine, forming part of the broader project of self-recreation as an individual, a Palestinian, a woman, and an activist. Bilal not only provides Nahr with genuine and unconditional love—something she had yearned for—but also educates her in matters of nationalism and resistance. Their relationship, therefore, becomes a profound form of resistance and a source of enduring strength for Nahr.

3.6 Teaching survival to others and the verge of violence

In a parallel fashion to Bilal's role as her educator, Nahr takes upon herself the responsibility of educating her people on how to survive in their homeland and resist non-violently against the oppressive occupiers who employ deceit and power to seize their land. The act of teaching others to survive and resist becomes a significant form of her resistance—a form that can be described as tertiary resistance. The collective nature of this project takes shape: a prominent figure in the resistance movement educates Bilal, who, in turn, educates Nahr. Subsequently, Nahr extends her knowledge to those around her.

At a certain juncture, Nahr experiments with violent forms of resistance. This is evident in the incident that unfolds near the fruit tree, a place imbued with her mother's stories. Here, she physically confronts an Israeli woman. This raises a critical question: under what circumstances is it justifiable to resort to physical harm in the pursuit of freedom? the novel leaves the question open-ended though the insinuations from Nahr’s life point to a transformation from non-violence to militancy.

Another relevant issue worth discussing is the portrayal of the other in the novel. All the Israeli characters in the novel are presented one-dimensionally without any significant exemption. Of course, this reduces the convincing nature of the narrative and its balance. It would have been better to have at least one full-fledged Israeli character that would provide the other viewpoint. However, it seems that Abualhawa did not see the necessity of this, and, on the other hand, Nahr’s suffering has driven her to extreme focus on the self (personal and national) that is endangered.

3.7 The ending: “The whore hero terrorist”

Towards the conclusion of the novel, Nahr describes her release from the cube:

> The guards unshackle my legs, but I do not move. People come in and out and look at me. They want to see Bilal Jalal Abu Jabal’s wife. The only prisoner released to Jordan. The whore hero terrorist. I lift my legs onto the sofa and lie down, missing the Cube (Abulhawa 2020: 269).

This ending befits the heroine of the story, signifying the culmination of her journey from an oppressed refugee girl to a distinguished political prisoner released before an audience. The triple designation she uses to describe herself (“whore hero terrorist”) encapsulates the stages of her life and resonates with the three names given to her throughout her journey: Nahr, Yaqoot (her father's preferred name), and Almas (her nickname in the escort profession).

These three roles are not presented as mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The recurrence of these designations at the novel's conclusion is significant, reminding the reader of the multifaceted nature of Nahr's identity. Through these roles, Nahr embodies the collective experiences of individual women, Palestinian refugees, and women in general. Her journey encompasses the suffering, learning, and outcomes associated with these roles, highlighting the complexity and richness of her life story.

4. Conclusion

The two novels present two heroines whose life events represent different forms of non-violent resistance that the Palestinian people in and out of the homeland are engaged in. As the previous discussion has hopefully shown, these forms are not always conscious acts but oftentimes happen unconsciously throughout life struggles and encounters. In such narratives, taking things allegorically becomes eminent, and one is forced to look at these characters and their stories as allegorical representations of the Palestinian nation. This is perhaps due to the communal nature of the suffering that the Palestinian people and the generational legacy that they pass on.

Thus, affinities abide between the stories of the two heroines. Focusing on the topic of this paper, which is non-violent resistance, the two novels share several aspects in this regard. First, there is the powerful and dominant symbolism of the olive tree as emblematic of the strong bond with the land and the ability to survive under harsh circumstances. A quick look at the visual representation of Palestine and the Palestinians can show the centrality of the olive tree. This is why the families of the two heroines made sure to point to an olive tree by way of instilling their daughters with the love of the land, the heritage, and the “Sumud”.

Similarly, other emblems of traditional and folkloric life were emphasized and manipulated as tools for instilling the spirit of resistance and the communal legacy in the Palestinian generations. This is witnessed in Amal’s and Nahr’s stories. Amal has her parents to pass on that legacy and Nahr has to go through an initiation journey when she returns home which includes a rediscovery of her cultural roots. So, parallel to the olive tree, clinging to traditions and cultural heritage is the immaterial equivalence to the roots of the olive tree. Education and creative expression are also supportive elements, so this is why getting a higher education such as in the case of Amal, or practicing artistic activities are definite ways in the struggle against oppression and occupations.

Love serves as a shared expression of non-violent resistance, presenting a rational pursuit in what may appear to be a "loveless world" as a survival strategy. In the context of oppression defined by hatred, love emerges as a potential remedy.

The two novels explore diverse manifestations of love, beginning with an affection for the land, often personified as a lover—a prevalent metaphor in resistant poetry. Additionally, romantic love serves as a form of resistance, exemplified by Nahr's quest for genuine romantic connection amid the challenges she faces. This narrative underscores the inherent connection between love and non-violence, establishing a framework that unifies various forms of resistance. It is crucial to bear in mind that love persists even in the most severe regimes of oppression, whether they be social or political.

Another convergence in the two novels lies in the layered significance of the heroines' trajectories. Oppression and occupation intertwine to pose the primary challenges confronting these protagonists. Consequently, feminist and nationalist elements converge to weave a narrative of the struggle against injustice in its broader sense. The novels intricately weave together the personal and communal aspects, as evidenced earlier, making self-discovery and assertion pivotal in the heroines' journeys to freedom, however relative those concepts may be. The complexity of this combination, according to the authors, contributes to the universal significance of the novels. This universal appeal is further reinforced by the nuanced portrayal of the enemy, especially in *Mornings in Jenin*, where the adversary is not demonized but presented in a multifaceted manner. Such a humanist approach to the underlying cause adds depth to the narrative, transcending simplistic perspectives.

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