

Trauma and Resistance in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

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Abstract: *In an age dominated by violence and terror, the study of trauma theory in literature is crucial. This research paper aims to explore the concept of trauma novel and its features, depict the various types of trauma and the stages of trauma response in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin (2010). This novel has been translated into more than twenty languages because it draws the attention of the West to the plight of the Palestinian people and their forced evacuation from their homeland since 1948. My analysis highlights the healing process of overcoming trauma through engaging in a narrative memory. Abulhawa uses trauma as a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural regimes and practices. Trauma narratives function as a testimony to the negativities of Israeli policy in Palestine.*

Key words: Cultural memory, Mornings in Jenin, Susan Abulhawa, Trauma narrative, Trauma theory

In the contemporary age where violence and terror prevail, the study of the trauma theory is crucial. Felman and Laub (1992:1) perceive the twentieth century as a "Post-Traumatic century" especially after the two World Wars and the abuse of the marginalized. Fassin and Rechtman (2009:15) maintain that trauma "has been established as a unique way of approaching the traces of history and one of the dominant modes of representing our relationship with the past".

Among the novelists who deals with trauma is the Palestinian American Susan Abulhawa. *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) is Abulhawa's first novel which has attracted the attention of the West to the plight of the Palestinian people from 1948 onwards. It provoked the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy after its publication. Levy thinks that the novel contributes to the demonization of the Israeli state and calls it a distressing development towards anti-Semitism (*Huffington Post*). Abulhawa takes the lead in delivering the literary Palestinian voice to the world in English. In an interview with Olivia Snaije in Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, Abulhawa states:

I think times are changing. There is a new generation of writers who have lived most 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 did not 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 (2012:3).

The aim of this research paper is to explore the concept of the trauma novel in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) using Cathy Caruth and Ronald Granofsky modern trauma theories. It aims to prove that this novel is an example of trauma fiction with all its features. It examines the stages of trauma response namely regression, fragmentation and reunification which the main character passes through. Moreover, the textual analysis highlights the healing process of overcoming trauma through engaging in narrative memory using Dominick LaCapra's views.

To read *Mornings in Jenin* within the framework of trauma studies necessitates a quick look at the origin of the theory, its definition, and how to overcome its drastic impact. Although this theory has its origin in medicine, it crept gradually into the humanities in the 90s with Cathy Caruth, a professor of Comparative Literature and English at Emory University. She is the first one to use the term 'Literary trauma theory' that helps in conceptualizing trauma. The originally Greek term 'trauma' refers to an injury inflicted on the body rather than on the mind. Its latter application illustrates conditions concerning the mind (Caruth 1996:3). In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association defined the long-recognized but frequently ignored phenomenon under the title 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD), "which included the symptoms of what had previously been called Shell-Shock, Combat Stress, Delayed Stress Syndrome, and Traumatic Neurosis that referred to responses both human and natural catastrophes" (Caruth 1995:3). Trauma does not refer mainly to the traumatic event but to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage with its symptoms known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In *Unclaimed Experience* (1995) Cathy Caruth defines the term "Literary trauma" by saying: "It is the story of a wound that cries out; that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our every actions and our language" (1995:4). Ronald Granofsky comprehends the experience of trauma to be one "which defies reason and a sense of order, cripples our ability to maintain a stable sense of reality, challenges our categories of understanding and consequently the model of the world by which we unconsciously operate" (2012:8). Fassin and Rechtman describe trauma more clearly as follows:

Trauma has become a major signifier of our age. It is our normal means of relating present suffering to past violence. It is the scar that a tragic event leaves on an individual victim or on a witness. Sometimes even on the perpetrator. It is also the collective imprint on a group of a historical

experience that may have occurred decades, generations or even centuries ago (2009:xi).

In the postmodern age, literary trauma theory has been used in the analysis of the postcolonial novel. Anne Whitehead maintains that trauma fiction overlaps especially with postcolonial fiction “in its concern with the recovery of memory and the acknowledgment of the denied, the repressed and the forgotten” (2004: 82). Michelle Balaev defines a trauma novel as a work of fiction that displays profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels (2008:149). He states:

The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character’s identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger context, and, in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma (2008:149).

Ronald Granofsky clarifies that what distinguishes the trauma novel from other novels is the exploration through the agency of literary symbolism of the individual experience of collective trauma, either actual events of the past, alarming tendencies of the present, or imagined horrors of the future (2012:5). Hence trauma novels are those which deal with a historical collective disaster that leaves its traces on the individual to an extent that the collective experience will be portrayed in personal terms. Trauma novels have two main features: the first is a self-conscious attitude to the witnessing of historical events in the collective disasters which are the subjects of trauma novels. The second feature is the theme of survival for trauma novels are presented as the narratives of survivors (Granofsky 2012:13).

Among the core concepts in literary trauma theory is “transhistorical trauma” which deals with the traumatic experience as “repetitious, timeless and unspeakable, yet, it is also a literal, contagious, and mummified event” (Balaev 2008:150). Caruth maintains that “the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and intermittently, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will” (1996:2). According to her, trauma is never simply one’s own but precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas (1996:24). The traumatic experience has the power to infect other people who are connected by a shared history or ethnic origin through the act of narration. This leads Caruth to claim that traumatic experience is transhistorically passed across generational gaps, primarily through verbal or written acts of remembering (1996: 24) Similarly, Kirby Farrell maintains that everyone can experience trauma as long as he shares the same ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, or economic background thereby resulting in a ‘post-traumatic’ culture (1998:3). This

clarifies that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares the history of a certain group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristics of traumatic experience and memory (see Balaev 2008:150). Hence trauma narratives can recreate the historical traumatic event for those people who are not there. This notion helps in the formation of cultural identity of a specific group who experience trauma through shared history.

According to this theory, one can consider *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa as a trauma novel in which she uses trauma as a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural regimes and practices. She deals with trauma “as a collective experience, an instrument of oppression, or a means to explore and understand gender identity, formation and creativity” (Waites 1993:3). The different types of trauma are intermingled to reflect the Palestinian culture. According to Deborah Horvitz, there are various types of trauma: political or cultural trauma and psychological or personal trauma (2000:11). She defines cultural trauma as “an officially sanctioned, sadomasochistic system of oppression in which a targeted group, perceived by the dominant culture as an obstacle to the goals of the existing hegemony, are tortured, imprisoned or killed” (p. 11). As for psychological trauma, Horvitz describes it as a “sadomasochistic violence against a designated victim, who is personally known by her assailant” (p. 11). The cultural sociologist, Alexander (2004), asserts that cultural trauma occurs when members of collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (2004:1). He further clarifies that traumas are not naturally existent but are rather “constructed by society” (2). Arthur Neal clarifies that collective traumas in which national and cultural traumas are subcategories have an “explosive quality... creating disruption and radical change within a short period of time” (1998:9-10). Kai Erikson (1978) states the difference between collective and individual traumas as follows:

By individual trauma, I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively... By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness to those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma'. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared... “We” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (ibid:153-154).

Beside these two types comes a third one which is known as insidious trauma. According to Olu Jenzen, it is the conceptualization of everyday life oppressive

experiences as traumatic events (2010:4). He maintains that forms of “insidious trauma” include “living in severe poverty, or the impact of racism, colonialism, and homophobia”. What happened to the Palestinians during the Israeli’s occupation is reckoned to be a paradigm of political or cultural trauma especially after the 1948 defeat or Nakba that “led to their exile, the cornerstone of their social identity” (Nets-Zehngut 2011:275). With its ongoing accumulated everyday forms of atrocities exercised on a group of disempowered vulnerable people, the Israeli’s occupation of Palestine also offers a striking example of insidious trauma.

Abulhawa operates memory to revisit the same events which allow for the occurrence of trauma. Her awareness of the multi-faced aspects of trauma nurtured since her childhood as she was born to a refugee family in 1970. Like many other Palestinians, Susan Abulhawa has to cope with the trauma of her people which touches every aspect of their public and personal lives. Her novel reflects her awareness of the impact of trauma on the individual psyche and on the society. Like all the Palestinians, her fundamental belief is to liberate the land and to restore it. Edward Said confirms this concern when he says: “the insistence on the right to see the community’s history whole...restore the imprisoned nation to itself” (1994:259). Moreover, Lucian Pye (1962:121) states: “Political culture is shaped on the one hand by the general historical experience of the society or system and on the other hand by the intensely private and personal experiences of the individuals as they become members of first the society and then the polity”.

In writing *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa “expands [her] readers awareness of trauma by engaging them with personalized, experientially, oriented means of narration that highlight the painful ambivalence that characterizes traumatic memory and warns [them] that trauma reproduces itself if left unattended” (Waites 1993: 3). Therefore, she tries to reshape cultural memory through personal contexts, adopting testimonial traits to bear witness of such horrible events (p. 3). Abulhawa tries to keep the world’s consciousness alert to the Palestinian’s plight. According to Said’s definition of the intellectual, Abulhawa is ...

neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formula, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwillingly, but actively willing to say so in public (ibid:23).

She realizes that the Palestinian memory is based almost totally on “oral history unlike the Israeli historical memory that is almost totally based on documents” (Nets-Zehngut 2011: 272) regarding 1948 war. Therefore, *Mornings in Jenin* is considered a historical document in which Abulhawa registers previously neglected historical catastrophes and gives voice to repressed stories from the perspective of the victims.

Mornings in Jenin revolves around a pervasive political issue which is El Nakba in 1948. This cultural trauma marked the creation of the state of Israel and the beginning of the displacement of Palestinians. It turned the Palestinian people into refugees. It became a 'watershed in Arab history' because "between 77 and 83 percent of the Palestinians who lived in the part of Palestine that later became Israel – i.e. 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine – were turned into refugees" (Sa'di 2002:175). Peteeet also maintains that around 2,428,100 Palestinian people were turned into refugees (1995:168). Moreover, Sa'di declares that about 418 villages were erased, and out of twelve Palestinian or mixed towns, a Palestinian population continued to exist in only seven" (2002: 184). Those people who survived this catastrophe found that "their whole existence had been radically altered" (Sa'di 2002: 184). Within the land of Palestine, there were drastic and systematic changes by the Zionist state in the occupied territories. These included the change of the Arabic names of streets and cities into Hebrew or European. Ahmed Sa'di focuses on the impact of the Nakba on the Palestinians as follows:

El Nakba was the moment in history when the Palestinians' world order, which had been considered part of the "laws of nature", was violently and dramatically altered: their legal rights as having personae – that is, as being legal subjects – were greatly diminished or obliterated altogether. Their cultural and physical environment underwent a dramatic transformation; and their existence as national community ceased to be taken for granted (ibid:185).

This cultural trauma made the Palestinians who lived on the land of Palestine see themselves living in a state of perpetual exile or as 'a refugee nation', a situation captured by Edward Said in the title of his autobiography *Out of Place* (Suleiman 2006: 7). Hence "the term 'refugee' became associated in modern Arabic sensibility with the establishment of Israel" as "the fate of the refugee became paradigmatic of Palestinian experience in general" (Siddiq 1995:87). In *Mornings in Jenin* Abulhawa states:

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. The twelve months of that year rearranged themselves and swirled aimlessly in the heart of Palestine. The old folks of Ein Hod would die refugees in the camp, bequeathing to their heirs the large iron keys to their ancestral homes, the crumbling land registers issued by Ottomans, the deeds from the British mandate, their memories and love of the land, and the dauntless will not to leave the spirit of forty generations trapped beneath the subversion of thieves (p. 35).

Mornings in Jenin consists of a prelude and eight main parts which roughly correspond to historical periods: ‘El Nakba’, ‘El Naksa’, ‘The Scar of David’ which refers to the Palestinian resistance movement, ‘El Ghurba’, ‘Albi fi Beirut’ which includes the massacre of Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, ‘Elly Bayna’ which speaks of the first intifada through 9/11, ‘Baladi’ and ‘Nihaya o Bidaya’ which deal with Jenin refugee camp and its massacre in 2002. Marcy Knopf-Newman claims that “in each period, place stands for a historical meaning as well as a way of mapping the spatial terrain of Palestine and Palestinian life in traditional villages and refugee camps”. Abulhawa narrates these historical events through the narration of Amal, the youngest daughter of four generations of Abulheja family in Ein Hod, a village located near Haifa. The novel opens in 1941 and deals with the *fellah* life before El Nakba. The Palestinian villagers have a peaceful life that depends on olive harvests. In Ein Hod people’s lives are focusing on farming the land of their ancestors. Hasan Abulheja, Amal’s father, has a strong relationship with Ari Perlstein, a Jewish friend who “was the son of a German professor who had fled Nazism early and settled in Jerusalem” (*Mornings* 8). Both the Jewish and the Palestinian families respect and help each other through their children’s friendship:

Thus a friendship had been born in the shadow of Nazism in Europe and in the growing divide between Arab and Jew at home, and it had been consolidated in the innocence of their twelve years, the poetic solitude of books, and their disinterest in politics (*Mornings* 9).

Abulhawa mingles cultural and personal trauma to highlight the impact of El Nakba on Palestinians. The part of the novel which covers the events of 1948 becomes significant for the sense of loss of Dalia, Amal’s mother, due to the kidnapping of her six-month-old son, Ismael, by an Israeli soldier, Moshe. Ismael’s kidnapping stands as a metaphor for the kidnapping of the land. The change of his name from an Arabic one to a Jewish one also stands for what really happens to the streets and cities of Palestine. In infancy, Ismael is accidentally scarred on his face by his brother, Yousef: “The physical remnantwas a distinctive scar that would mark Ismael’s face forever, and eventually lead him to his truth” (*Mornings* 22). Therefore, Amal’s mother, Dalia, suffers from personal trauma:

An instant can crush a brain and change the course of life, the course of history. It was an infinitesimal flash of time that Dalia would revisit in her mind, over and over for many years, searching for some clue, some hint of what might have happened to her son. Even after she became lost in an eclipsed reality, she would search the fleeing crowd in her mind for Ismael (*Mornings* 32).

Dalia’s personal trauma is clarified by Cathy Caruth’s statement: “trauma describes an overwhelming experience or catastrophic events in which the

response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (1996:11).

Dalia screamed “Ibni! Ibni! My son, My son. Her eyes bulging in search of her son. Dust at her face, cactus at her feet....Is this a dream? Nothing seemed real because it was unbelievable. She looked at her arms again to be sure. Maybe he’s crawled into my thobe. She felt her chest. No Ismael. Her son was gone (*Mornings* 33).

Amal, the protagonist of the novel, was born in the refugee camp of Jenin in 1955. Until her birth, her mother still “wore a cloak of bereavement for Ismael, sheathing herself in black grief that reached to her wrists and ankles” (*Mornings* 51). Therefore, Amal grows up with a mother devastated by the kidnapping of her younger son, Ismael. Dalia still feels despair and anguish towards her loss. “She was mad with anguish, questioning people and uncovering other women’s babies in hope of revealing a boy with a scar down his right cheek, around his eye. She searched with frenzied foreboding (33). As a young girl, Amal’s relationship with her mother is devoid of love and tenderness.

[Dalia] learned to be a stoic mother, communicating the demands and tenders of motherhood with the various tempers of silence. Against this quiet detachment, the girl offered fits and petulance, mixed with bursts of kisses and feverish need meant to provoke her mother. Dalia’s love found its expression during the child’s sleep. Then she stroked her daughter’s hair, loved her endlessly with the kisses she withheld during the child’s waking hours (*Mornings* 52).

Accordingly, Amal spends most of her time with her father, Hasan, who embraced her with love and care and taught her classical Arabic poetry. He taught her that “the land and everything on it can be taken away, but no one can take away your knowledge or the degrees you earn” (p. 60). Time spent with her father is remarkable for the memories of these mornings will be her “only thread of solace” (61) in her ghurba life in Pennsylvania. Amal has never known “a place as safe as” her father’s embrace. She has never known “a tender time than the dawn, coming with the smell of honey apple tobacco” (61) of her father. The title of the novel refers to these moments with her father in Jenin before Al Naksa. Amal narrates: “I told no one of the incident and I lived through the day in anticipation of night, the darkness just before dawn, hoping to once again have a special place in Baba’s morning” (p. 58).

In 1967 the Palestinians suffer from another cultural trauma which is El Naksa (Six Day War of the Setback). It refers to the flight of 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians out of the territories captured by Israel during and in the aftermath of this disaster. As a result, Israel controlled the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

which were ruled by Jordan and Egypt respectively (see Bowker 2003: 81). Dalia suffers from dementia, Al Zehimar, after Al Naksa. Amal narrates:

The war changed us, Mama most of all. It withered Mama. Her essential fiber unraveled, leaving her body a mere shell that often filled with hallucination. Following the occupation and the disappearance of my brother and father, Mama hardly left her prayer mat. She had no desire for food and refused even the paltry rations that arrived on the charity truck. The cotton of her gown grew dark with the stench of her unbased body, and her breath soured. She smelled of fermented misery. Her lips hardened into a web of cracks and her body shrank, while she prayed. And prayed. And while her body lost mass, I watched her eyes grow vacant, betraying a mind that would henceforth slowly forfeit its charge of reality (*Mornings* 86).

The impact of El Naksa on Dalia is very destructive especially after the loss of her husband and the disappearance of her second son, Youssef in 1967. She keeps silent all the time and sticks to praying. After this personal trauma, she sat motionless in a corner. "Her spacious empty eyes did not see [Amal] standing before her. She seemed to see nothing" (p. 73). She lost her wits completely.

The suffering of the Palestinian people increases after Al Naksa. "They were transformed into 'the Jews of the Middle East'. They are stateless, marginalized and undesired everywhere in Israel" (Manna 2013:96). The impact that the Israeli invasion has on Palestinians is great as it affects the rapidly increasing number of evacuation from their homeland, thus destroying the fabric of the Palestinian community/unity, with the displacement of its people onto different continents. Actually "400000 Palestinians were expelled during Al Naksa (Setback) war in 1967" (Shiblak 2009). Abulhawa describes the Palestinian's feeling as follows: "They rose from their agitation to the realization that they were slowly being erased from the world, from its history and from its future" (*Mornings* 48).

During Al Naksa in 1967, Amal faces personal trauma at the age of twelve during which she witnesses the war and its impact. Amal's mother hides her with her friend, Huda, in the kitchen's hole under the sink. After a long time she hands her a three-month old cousin, Aisha, with a loaf of bread and milk for the baby. Amal narrates: "I remained in the hole for what seemed like an eternity of ghostly quiet" (68). Days passed and they are 'sobbing in terror'. Beyond the tiled cover of the hole, they could hear children wailing, destruction and blasts of fire. They also hear "the odor of burning flesh, fermenting garbage, and scorched foliage mixed with the smell of [their] excrement in the dust" (69). A loud explosion takes off the cover and they are covered with dust and debris. They are filled with terror especially after the death of the baby cousin. They face death and experience hunger/famine for six days. They also dug a small

shelf in the earth with their fingers to lay the dead body of the baby in the wall of the hole. After that Amal realizes that the camp of Jenin is destroyed. She feels paralyzed unable to lift her feet as she asserts:

I stood again, careful to peek without being seen. All I could see of the soldiers were their legs. They were 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. 71).

For a whole week Amal stays with her friend in the hole experiencing death in life. From her place, she also watches one of her neighbors lying on the ground with a gun in his hand and his dead son in the other. The son is shot by the Israeli soldiers and the man got shocked. Amal and her friend are saved by a nun from the Red Crescent after seizure of fire and are taken to a treatment tent where Amal sees her mother also in shock as a result of the Israeli attack. Amal hates her mother for being in that state not understanding her predicament. Thus when asked about her she denies any relation to this woman. Amal becomes traumatized by what she has experienced during Al Naksa. She keeps silent after being taken to the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem. She finds many children orphaned by the war sitting on the floor. She observes:

No one spoke much, as if to speak was to affirm reality. To remain silent was to accommodate the possibility that it all was merely a nightmare. The silence reached up to the cathedral ceiling and cluttered there, echoing sadness and unseen mayhem, as if too many souls were rising at once. We are existing somewhere between life and death, with neither accepting us fully (p. 75).

Amal describes what she suffers during these six days as hell. The nun helps them bathe to clean themselves. Amal maintains: "The warm water traveled over my body like a loving embrace, whispering a promise of safety" (75). They feel safe and secure. Amal feels released from the tiresome sense of horror and loss after taking this bath. She is released from earthly ruin. She goes back to the past and the days of Christ's birth. She begins to realize that this journey restores her back to life and humanity. She returns to the primitive, maternal sources of life and energy in order to gain strength and protection from the troubles of life. She wishes to be a fish to escape the sounds of screams and gunfire. She wants to stay in water which restores her to life.

Slowly, I let my body slide, pulling my head beneath the water. There, in that silent world, like the stillness I had heard after the blast that had torn the kitchen and killed Aisha, I had an odd desire to be a fish. I could live inside water's soothing world, where screams and gunfire were not heard and death was not smelled (p. 76).

The act of bathing after all these hardships that she faces resembles a new rebirth for her new personality. Amal is going to be stronger and more mature in

facing difficulties. She asserts: "I calculated one week as the distance between girlish vanity and hell" (p. 76). She is going to be responsible for her sick mother who is detached from normal life because she has "a broken mind". After her mother's death, Amal is sent to an orphanage in Jerusalem where she stays for four years.

According to Balaev, the traumatized protagonist in fiction brings into awareness the specificity of individual trauma that is often connected to larger social factors and cultural values and ideologies. Trauma novel provides a picture of the individual that suffers, but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an 'every person' figure. A significant purpose of the protagonist is often to refer to a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender, have collectively experienced massive trauma. In this regard, the fictional figure magnifies a historical event in which thousands or millions of people have suffered a similar violence (2008: 152). Amal's miserable condition becomes the condition of those who survive the attack. No one is excluded in the refugee camps from witnessing this exterminating war. Hajj Salem, the historian of the Jenin camp, states: "I've seen it all. All the wars. They kicked us off the land and they took all the furniture I had made" (p. 78). Amal asserts that his story is everyone's story:

A single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one's humanity, of being dumped like rubbish into refugee camps unfit for rats. Of being left without rights, home, or nation while the world turned its back to watch or cheer the jubilation of the usurpers proclaiming a new state they called Israel (p. 78).

In the portrayal of the personal (psychological) trauma, the traumatized protagonist passes through three stages of trauma response namely regression, fragmentation and reunification. In trauma novels "the regressive stage is depicted when human forces are seen at their most primitive and brutal, and as a recuperative response to trauma" (Granofsky 2012:108). The traumatized character goes back to a state characterized by a protected existence comparable to life in the womb where there is no anxiety. Collective movements may be considered as mass forms of regression. In *Mornings in Jenin* the stage of regression is obvious in Amal's life before El Naksa when she is fully protected by her father. She states: "All I wanted was to see Baba. Nothing else mattered. Nothing less would heal my wound but to lie in the safety of his embrace and hear him whisper that everything was going to be fine" (p. 82). This stage can also refer to the Palestinians' desire to return to their homelands and to their farming life before El Nakba in 1948: "Like the rest of us, [Abu Sameeh] looked forward to the return, when we would all go home" (p. 70).

The second stage of trauma response is fragmentation which may be the result of a 'shattering' experience, and an important stage in collecting the psyche to overcome trauma. The traumatized character lacks a cohesive self. It tries to hide its weakness and self-esteem by constructing a 'grandiose self' that

restores harmony and peace. During this stage the protagonist is lost and distracted. In the novel under study Amal passes through this fragmented stage after the death of her mother and the disappearance of her father and her elder brother, Youssef. As a result, she is sent to an orphanage “Dar el Tifl el Araby” in Jerusalem where she stays for four years. Amal identifies herself with the girls in the orphanage who are connected by a tormented past and painful memories. She narrates:

In the process of trying to steady my gait in a life that shook with uncertainty, I learned to make peace with the present by unknowingly breaking love lines to the past. Growing up in a landscape of improvised dreams and abstract national longings, everything felt temporary to me. Nothing could be counted on to endure, neither parents nor siblings nor home. Not even one’s body, vulnerable as it was to bullets. I had long since accepted that one day I would lose everything and everyone... I understood thatand I cried selfishly for myself, and for the crystals freezing over my heart (p. 156).

After that she receives a scholarship and goes to the States to obtain a degree. She changes her name to Amy and isolates herself from her past memories. She lives without any threat of wars. She asserts: “I metamorphosed into an unclassified Arab-Western hybrid, unrooted and unknown. I drank alcohol and dated several men—acts that would have earned me repudiation in Jenin” (p. 173).

In becoming Amy, she suppresses her Palestinian identity and tries to fit in the American society. Abu-Shomar maintains that Amal abandons the Palestinian history of resistance to Israeli annihilation encoded in her very name by becoming the clipped ‘Amy’ (2015:132). She seeks psychological serenity and wholeness away from her painful past memories in Jenin. She claims:

The Palestinian girl of pitiable beginnings was trampled in my rush to belong and find relevance in the West. I dampened my senses to the world, tucking myself into an American niche with no past. For the first time I lived without threats and the sediments of war. I lived free of soldiers, free of inherited dreams and martyrs tugging at my hands (p. 174).

Amal tries to avoid her feeling of nostalgia during this fragmented phase in order to adopt a hyphenated identity. However, she feels guilty and shameful because she betrays herself and her family. She observes: “the undercurrent of my life in America was a sense of shame that I had betrayed my family—or worse, myself. But I consigned myself to American mores and subscribed to their liberties” (p. 174).

Reunification or reconciliation is the final stage in the depiction of the trauma response. This stage is achieved only through reconciliation and acceptance of the traumatic experience. This is clear in the novel when Amal is reunited with her elder brother, Youssef, in Lebanon. She recalls and celebrates the happy memories of her childhood in Jenin before El Naksa. She gets married to her brother’s best friend, Majid, after a romantic relationship. Then she leaves

for the States before the massacre of Sabra and Shatila during which she loses her husband and her sister-in-law. She experiences loss and helplessness once more. She passes through another trauma for the loss of her husband. Abulhawa registers this collective disaster in 1982 in Lebanon as follows:

By August, the results were 17,500 civilians killed, 40,000 wounded, 400,000 homeless, and 100,000 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. "We are here for peace. This is a peacekeeping mission" (p. 219).

After this massacre, she delivers her daughter, Sara, who restores her back to life. Amal has double feelings towards her daughter:

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....I loved her in spite of myself. I loved her immeasurably. Infinitely (p. 231).

Amal reaches the reconciliation state when she attempts to overcome her psychological trauma by reuniting with her long-lost Israeli brother, Ismael or David, on his quest for his true identity. When David asks Amal if she still sees him as an "abstraction," she thinks silently:

No....You and I are the remains of an unfulfilled legacy, heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities and ragged confusion. In the complicity of siblinghood, of aloneness and unrootedness, Amal loved David instinctively, despite herself and despite what he had done or who he had become (p. 270).

David, Ismael, asks Amal and her daughter, Sara, to accompany him for a return trip to the Middle East. He is tormented by "that ache of not belonging and the shakiness of an inverted identity" (p. 283). During her visit to Jenin in 2002, Amal is shot by an Israeli soldier after looking in his eyes. She feels 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" (pp. 305-306).

Abulhawa adopts a humanistic attitude that calls for love and peace between people who share the same feeling of dispersion or dislocation. Abu-Shomar asserts that Abulhawa maintains a sense of ethical humanism and moral dicta while speaking and voicing the Israeli characters (2015:133). Her objective attitude in narrating the novel with all the Palestinian calamities prohibits her personal feelings of hatred from surfacing. She is one of the real intellectuals who are "endowed with the faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude philosophy or opinion to, as well as for a public... and this role has an edge to it, to confront orthodoxy and dogma" (Said 1993: 11). Despite being exilic herself, Abulhawa has a deep sympathetic attitude towards the Jewish characters in the novel. Khan asserts: "Nowhere in the story has she lost the touch of humanity" (2010:1). Amal expresses a rational feeling towards Jolanta, the German Jewish woman who raises Ismael with care and love after suffering from the Nazis. Amal reasons:

Jolanta gave her blessing for David to do whatever his heart commanded. Be he Jew or Gentile, Jolanta loved that boy. God only knows how much. That love had saved her once upon a time. Jolanta had done what neither Dalia nor Amal could do: she has transformed the energy of her pain into expressions of love, and David was the sole beneficiary. Jolanta had been remorseful, prepared to help David find the family of his birth....She wanted.... to embrace the woman who had given birth to her David and find reconciliation in the truth. For if life had taught her anything, it was that healing and peace can begin only with acknowledgments of wrongs committed (pp. 256-257).

Not only does Abulhawa sympathize with Jolanta but with her husband, Moshe, as well. Moshe's desire is for Jolanta, his barren wife, to be happy, for 'She wanted to escape the memories of sweaty German men polluting her body, memories of depravity and memories of hunger' (*Mornings* 36). Moshe and Jolanta name Ismael, David who grows up as an Israeli soldier and fights against his Palestinian people. Moshe usually dreams of a homeland and a family but does not want the killings and rapes that his mission obliges him to do. He contemplates:

His gift to Jolanta in 1948 had grown into a secret too heavy to carry. That truth was not a butterfly but a demon—a demon with the beautiful face of an Arab woman who had served him lamb. Whose sons, one at her chest and the other at her legs, had moved with her, and who still cried, "Ibni, Ibni!" inside Moshe's head. He had not wanted all this. He had wanted wholeness: a homeland, a wife, a family. He had fought to save the Jewish people. But at his heels now were the awful evictions, the killings, the rapes. Moshe could not face all those faces, their voices. He found so little rest in his life (p. 99).

Moshe wants to confess to David to relieve his heart from this terrible burden. Finally before his death he tells David everything about his true identity. Abulhawa's humanistic attitude is clear for all her characters, either Palestinian or Jewish, who seek wholeness in this scattered and diasporic world.

Within the framework of trauma theory, healing from trauma manifests itself in one of two forms: first, it might be called melancholia. Second, it might be referred to as mourning to describe the condition of the traumatized person in overcoming trauma. Freud has used these two terms, melancholia and mourning, while Dominick LaCapra prefers the terms 'acting out' and 'working through' respectively.

Acting out, or melancholia, implies that the traumatized person still lives in the past for he keeps on remembering the painful events that cause his traumatic experience. LaCapra defines 'acting out' as a state "in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes....In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past relieving the traumatic scene" (2001: 21). In this case, the traumatic events keep on haunting the traumatized person due to

the fact that the past is “relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription” (LaCapra 2001:70). Acting out can also appear through compulsive behavior as amnesia or dementia, which is a lack of memory. Freud maintains: “the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it” (1924:150). The clear distinction between melancholy and mourning is due to the fact that “mourning represents an active working through of a traumatic loss, the former is characterized by inertia and self-hatred. The melancholic is apathetic, ...incapable of love and achievement” (qtd. in Versluys 2009:20). The traumatized person tries to resist remembering because the memories of the past are so painful. Freud asserts: “the greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering” (1924: 151). The traumatized person even prefers silence because he can’t find words to describe his deadly experience. The painful memories disturb his life and he cannot survive normally because these memories are alive in his mind.

In ‘Acting out’ there is a difference between absence and loss. LaCapra maintains: “In converting absence into loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity that others have ruined, polluted or contaminated and thus made ‘us’ lose” (2001: 58). Susan Abulhawa makes Dalia’s loss of her family dominate the first part of the novel as aftermath of El Nakba in 1948. Dalia keeps silent and prays most of the time for “silence might be the loudest sound of all” (qtd. in Versluys 2009:11). Her traumatic experience is so destructive that she lost her mind especially after the loss of her husband in 1967. As a result, Dalia couldn’t overcome this acting out condition. LaCapra asserts: “when absence, approximated to loss, becomes the object of mourning, the mourning may (perhaps must) become impossible and turn continually back into endless melancholy” (2001:68). Dalia can experience flashbacks of her traumatic event. Past memories keep haunting her because she is unable to distinguish between dream and reality.

The second form of healing from trauma is known as ‘working through’ for the traumatized person is overcoming the drastic effects of his painful experience by accepting it as part of his life. Thus he starts to mourn and learn to survive with it. He is able to turn ‘traumatic memory’ into ‘narrative memory’ (see Versluys 2009: 3). Dori Laub asserts that the survivors of any trauma “did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories, they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive” (1992:78). Similarly Caruth asserts that trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival. It is only by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience. (1996: 58).

Healing from trauma via ‘working through’ can be achieved by the act of bearing witness. Freud clarifies the aim of bearing witness: “Descriptively speaking, it is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, it is to overcome resistance due to repression” (1924:148). Deborah Horvitz thinks that testimony

is needed to resist cultural repression and to bear witness to oppression (2000: 2). For Tahrir Hamdy, the concept of bearing witness not only serves as a means of recording past tragedy but also involves a complex repertoire of strategies, including interrogating the past, recreating it and, most importantly, forging resistance against the assassination of liberation itself (ibid:21).

Barbie Zelizer maintains that bearing witness offers one way of 'working through' the difficulties that arise from traumatic experience by bringing individuals together on their way to collective recovery (2002:2). She maintains that bearing witness transfers individuals from the personal act of 'seeing' to the adoption of a public stance by which they become part of a collective 'working through' trauma together (2). Bearing witness is considered a tool of resistance which Abulhawa uses to record history. She aims to transfer to the present generations a past that has been intentionally erased and suppressed by the dominant narrative. Being a specialist in neurosis helps her to reveal the drastic impact of trauma either culturally or personally on the psyche. She understands that "trauma will be resolved, not only by setting right in the world, but by setting things right in the self" (Alexander 2004:5). She wants to "restore collective psychological health by lifting societal repression and restoring memory" (Alexander 2004:7). Bearing witness is not only an act of narration but also a commitment to others in taking responsibility for narrating history truthfully. It becomes a health sign for the traumatized people to move forward towards healing from trauma. This can be achieved through creating a chronological narrative. Suzette Henke mentions that the concept of scriptotherapy refers to the writing about trauma that can lead to individual and collective healing and alleviation of trauma symptoms. It offers the possibility of reinventing the self and reconstructing the subject ideologically and reassessing the past as pertaining to many fictional narratives that focus on protagonists who attempt to survive by creating enabling stories and self-concepts, thereby recovering a sense of self and agency in the face of devastating losses (2000: xii).

Abulhawa tries to narrate a novel that deals with the chronological history of Palestine since the beginning of El Nakba in 1948 until the massacre of Jenin in 2002. The novel bears some autobiographical incidents from Abulhawa's personal life especially her life in the orphanage where she spent four years before going to America and accepting a scholarship to study there. Olivia Snaije asserts that Abulhawa's rootlessness comes across in Amal, the main character in *Mornings in Jenin*, who is a gifted student and earns a scholarship to study in the US. Her raw loneliness and seeming aloofness, as a result of the emotional trauma she has been through, is described with such intensity that it seems nearly impossible that Amal is not Susan Abulhawa (ibid:3).

What helps Amal work through her psychological trauma is turning the traumatic memory of El Naksa in 1967 into narrative memory in the orphanage of Dar el Tifl el Araby. The girls there are of the same age as Amal and all of them share different traumatic experiences. Hence they are able to face the world after being healed from their painful memories. Amal's act of narration

itself becomes a kind of reclamation and restoration of her fragmented self. In an interview with Snaije, Susan Abulhawa maintains: “My childhood was quite unstable and unrooted, owing mostly to family circumstances. I have mostly felt my way through life” (ibid:3).

To conclude, Susan Abulhawa succeeds in probing the self of the Palestinians and in trying to heal herself and her own people from the cultural and personal trauma that they suffer from. She uses narrative memory as a means of resistance to the Palestinian erasure which is forced by the Israeli regime. As a specialist in neuroscience, she fully understands that trauma must not be left unhealed because it will keep surfacing. This research paper highlights how Abulhawa excels in using trauma theory to demonstrate the impact of Israeli policy in Palestine. It has attempted to explore the types of trauma and to analyze *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) as a trauma novel with all its aspects. Trauma is used as a powerful indicator of the Israeli oppressive regime. The stages of trauma response namely regression, fragmentation and reunification are highlighted in the life of the protagonist to reveal her predicament and suffering as a result of cultural and personal trauma. Finally, the healing process of overcoming trauma is tackled through introducing two main concepts: ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’. The textual analysis clarifies that those who undergo ‘acting out’ are totally destroyed by trauma while those who try to ‘work through’ their painful experience succeed in surviving with their destructive memories by changing the traumatic memory into narrative memory.

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