

Subaltern Representations in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*: A Postcolonial study

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Abstract:

The present paper intends to examine subaltern representations in Susan Abulhawa's novel, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010). This paper tackles the targeted novel from a postcolonial perspective, highlighting the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. This novel will be analysed on the basis on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notions on subaltern studies with the focus on how the characters' own moral development mirrors the collective progress of their country. *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) serves as both a literary act of resistance and a means of reviving the memory of the Palestinians' national struggle against the colonial Zionists. The study will also tackle how the rise of these figures to the status of national icons parallels the history of the Palestinian people and their strives for independence. In addition to the harshness inflicted on subaltern people and the crisis of the culture and identity of the colonized leading to growth in self-awareness and allowing protagonists to confront the leading edge of oppressive forces.

Keywords: Susan Abulhawa; *Mornings in Jenin*; subaltern; postcolonial; independence; self-awareness.

Introduction

Mornings in Jenin is a piece of post-1948 Palestinian exile literature that emphasizes the viewpoint of colonized people in exile, particularly the language of displacement, loss, home, the diaspora, resistance, pain, and subalternity, among other things. This work makes it clear that subaltern is defined as being marginalized and driven from one's own nation by a colonial power, in this case the Jewish occupation. It compares several post-colonial literary ideas and inserts colonialism into the subaltern discourse. As a Palestinian thinker who has been exiled, Susan Abulhawa addresses in her novel questions of national identity, language, setting, belonging, mobility, homecoming, and subalternity that are products of post-colonial literature.

The Zionist movement of the 19th century was the first spark for the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine. Leaders and supporters of Zionism worked to create circumstances there consistent with what they believed to be an Israeli occupation. In any case, the ultimate destiny of Jewish settlement was the last nail in their anxiety coffin. They were as worried about the future of the land's Arab residents as Arab officials were about the well-

being of Jews. Arabs responded to the Zionist cause, and throughout its formative phases, Zionist negotiators with more stable governmental forces (like the British) compared notes while keeping silent about Palestine's residents, who were far under a million. This was due to the rise of Labor Zionism, which, as pointed out by C. D. Smith (2001), openly banned Jewish labor among Arabs, leaving Arab employees onshore controlled by Jews, and sought a separate Jewish element in Palestine. Although these topics were discussed in the Jewish press, Palestinian Arabs learned about them as well, especially once a Palestinian Arab press emerged. Historically, Orthodox Christians have dominated the two anti-Zionist newspapers, Al-Karmil (1908, Haifa) and Filastin (1911, Jaffa). Palestinian representatives pleaded before the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul for the government to take more precautions against Zionism. From the furious overflow of the Franco-Syrian War in 1920 to the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, British-mandated Palestine was rocked by the traditional, political, and armed war between the Palestinians and the Jewish Yishuv.

Approach and Methodology

This paper encompasses postcolonial theory as its theoretical framework in its analysis of Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010). The term "post-colonial" originally had a strong temporal sense, meaning the age after independence from colonial rule, and was used by historians in expressions such as the post-colonial state after World War II. The effects of colonization on societies are analyzed. Yet since the late 1970s, literary scholars have been using the word to investigate the many cultural effects of colonialism. The term "post-colonial" was not used in the early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolises, which began in the late 1970s with texts like Said's *Orientalism* and resulted in the creation of what came to be recognized as colonialist discourse theory in the work of critics like Spivak and Bhabha (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007:168).

The current paper tackles subaltern representations in the targeted novel. Regarding subalternity, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1977) used the word "subaltern" in a civilian context in the 1920s and 1930s. Gramsci used this word to describe those who don't fall inside the parameters of conventional political representation. Slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, and people of various ethnicities are all included in the Gramscian definition of the subaltern since they are on the margins of Italian society and history (Gramsci, 1971). Ranajit Guha, who documented previous peasant revolts in India, served as the movement's major leader. Another important figure in this field is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She thinks colonialism is important to the colonizer's identity and culture. Many questions about the relationship between the colonial

powers and the subaltern communities are raised by her. As a result, these marginalized communities and the works they have created in the past, present, and future are often ignored (Francese, 2009).

Into Explication: Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

Morning in Jenin by Susan Abulhawa is a novel that represents the subaltern perspective, specifically that of the Palestinian people. The novel shows Palestinians as real people and gives a critical view of historical events that have affected their lives and communities, such as the 1948 Nakba, the occupation of the West Bank, and the ongoing conflict in the region.

Susan Abulhawa (born June 3, 1970) is a fantastic example of what a subaltern should be like. As a Palestinian Arab writer, she has been subjected to what is known as "double jeopardy." As a Palestinian and an Arab who is from the Middle East, she is oppressed by the cultural preconceptions of the West, and as an Arab who is also from the Middle East, she is oppressed by the occupation of Israel. Nonetheless, Abulhawa has been able to depict the Palestinian subalterns in her literary work through the ideas that she investigates in her novels. These ideas include identification, revolt, freedom, hope, death, martyrdom, exile, and other related topics. Her words were heard by people both locally and internationally. In reality, the Palestinian tragedy has spawned a new literary generation whose stated mission is to defend their homeland, return to their ancestral homes, claim their heritage, and refute Israel's false claims (Amina, p. 45).

By telling the story of one Palestinian family, *Morning in Jenin* gives voice to a group that is often marginalized and oppressed, providing a nuanced and empathetic representation of the Palestinian experience. In "Morning in Jenin," by Susan Abulhawa, the main character, Amal, shows what it's like to be a Palestinian subaltern. The novel tells the story of the Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank and highlights the struggles they face as a result of displacement, occupation, and oppression.

Through Amal's story, Abulhawa offers a subaltern representation of the Palestinian experience, highlighting the ways in which political and historical forces impact the lives of individuals and communities. The book also touches on themes of resistance, hope, and resilience. It shows how the Palestinian people keep going even when things are hard.

Susan Abulhawa offers a subaltern perspective on the Palestinian experience. The novel examines the issues of displacement, occupation, resistance, and subalternity. The novel provides voice to a group that has often been left out of popular narratives through the experiences of the protagonists. The portrayal of

the oppressed in *Morning in Jenin* underlines the fight for independence and self-determination and focuses awareness on the pain and injustices experienced by Palestinians.

So, without a doubt, Susan Abulhawa provides voice to the Palestinians who have been oppressed and marginalized by colonial Zionism. *Morning in Jenin* serves as a subaltern depiction. The novel depicts the sufferings of the Palestinians through the eyes of a representative of the broader story of the Palestinian people. Abulhawa emphasizes the human element of the war and how it affects the lives of common people by using a personal tale. By doing this, she challenges the prevailing narrative and gives the marginalized group agency, providing an alternative viewpoint to the prevalent perception of the conflict. Her novel challenges well-known stories and acts as a weapon of resistance by giving the voice of the Palestinian people who are being mistreated a place to be heard.

Amal's Character

Amal, a character in the story who is born into exile in Jenin Camp and is raised with her parents' memories of a place that was taken from them, is personified by Abulhawa. She is unable to feel safe, even while surrounded by her loved ones, after seeing the physical and psychic destruction wreaked by the war in 1967 on the camp and on them. Amal moves between the United States, Lebanon, and Palestine on a regular basis after receiving a scholarship to continue her study in the United States (Alhadhoud and Ammari, p. 6).

Amal, like no one else in her family, has an unconventional view of what it means to live at home. This is especially true of her two younger brothers. One fighting for his motherland, the other believing he is Israeli and trying to take it back for himself. As a result, she is the only member of her mother's family to experience feelings of disorientation, homelessness, and insecurity. After the passing of both her mother and father, Amal is taken from Jenin Camp and placed in an orphanage in Jerusalem. There, she will work hard in school and perhaps get a scholarship to continue her education in the United States (Ibid.).

Amal, now based in the United States, realizes she has far more of her true home to discover there than she has thus far. Because of this, she has come to realize that she can never find the security and comfort she craves in a world where her only recollections are of impersonal abstractions. This explains why she has been so determined to find a place where she can feel loved and accepted. Before moving to the United States, Amal says, "There was nothing left for me in Jenin but scraps of my childhood and the debris of the family lost forever, all of it packed beneath the boots and tank treads of patrolling Israeli soldiers" (Abulhawa, 158). She is conscious of the traumatizing effects her

memories of Jenin have had on her and knows that those times there did not make her feel at home. Thus, she sets off on the quest to find a new home with all her heart (Ibid., 7).

Amal as a Subaltern Character

In *The Portrayal of Palestinian Women in Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin*, Amina (2018) declares that:

Palestinians are born guilty of belonging to their roots, and for life they have to pay the sentence for a guilt they did not commit. The Israeli colonizer is persecuting an innocent population for the persecution the Jews endured for being Jewish; they are making the Arabs who thought the Jews were poor souls seeking refuge; live the same terror they fled from, a terror caused by Europe not the Arabs (p.88).

Subalternity is the social and political state of being lower on the totem pole or on the margins compared to those who have power and are in charge. Palestinian literature often has themes about being on the outside, because Palestinians have always been on the outside of politics, society, and the economy in their own country and around the world.

Palestinian literature has emerged as a powerful voice against subalternity, challenging the dominant narratives and power structures that have been imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli state and the global political system. Palestinian literature looks at themes like being forced to move, being in exile, fighting back, and fighting for identity and recognition.

The works of Palestinian writers such as Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, and Edward Said are often seen as representative of Palestinian literary resistance to subalternity. These writers have used their works to challenge the dominant narratives of Israeli occupation and highlight the Palestinian experience of displacement, dispossession, and the struggle for freedom (Powell, p. 24).

Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, for example, often explores the themes of exile, identity, and resistance, drawing on the experiences of Palestinian refugees who have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. In the same way, Ghassan Kanafani's books, like "Men in the Sun," have been praised for how they show how Palestinians struggle and fight against Israeli occupation.

Overall, Palestinian literature is a powerful tool for challenging subalternity and resisting the oppressive power structures that have marginalized Palestinians. Palestinian writers have helped give voice to the struggles and experiences of Palestinians and challenge the dominant stories that have been told about them.

Amal is one of the main characters in the novel *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa. She was born in Jenin, a Palestinian village, in 1948, the same year that Israel declared its independence and Palestinian refugees were forced to flee their homes.

Amal is a resilient and determined character who endures many challenges throughout her life. She is separated from her family at a young age when they are forced to flee their village, and she is raised in a refugee camp in Jenin. Despite the difficult living conditions and the loss of her family, Amal is a bright and curious child who loves to read and learn.

As she grows older, Amal becomes involved in the Palestinian resistance movement and begins to fight for the liberation of her people. She falls in love with a young man named Ismael, who shares her passion for justice and freedom. However, Ismael's imprisonment and torture by Israeli authorities put their love to the test.

Throughout the novel, Amal struggles with her identity and her place in the world. She is torn between her love for her homeland and her desire for a better life outside of the refugee camp. She also grapples with her feelings towards Israelis and whether there can ever be peace between the two peoples.

Despite the many challenges she faces, Amal remains steadfast in her beliefs and her commitment to the Palestinian cause. She is a symbol of resilience and hope, and her story sheds light on the experiences of Palestinians who have been displaced and oppressed for generations (Amina, p. 63).

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal is a subaltern character, which is a term used to describe those who are marginalized and oppressed by dominant social structures and who are often excluded from mainstream narratives and power structures.

Amal's experiences as a Palestinian refugee living in a camp in Jenin demonstrate the ways in which she is subjugated by the Israeli occupation and forced to live in conditions that are not of her choosing. She is denied the right to return to her ancestral home, and she is forced to live in poverty with limited access to resources and opportunities (Muhamad, pp. 5–6).

Despite these challenges, Amal is a strong and resilient character who fights for the liberation of her people. Her story sheds light on the struggles of Palestinians who have experienced marginalization and oppression as a result of Israeli occupation and whose voices are frequently absent from mainstream narratives.

Amal's experiences also demonstrate the ways in which subaltern individuals and communities can resist and challenge dominant power structures. She uses her voice and her actions to fight for justice and freedom, and her story serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by subaltern communities around the world.

Conclusion

It is possible to state that Amal employs the poetics of the subaltern when seen from a postcolonial perspective, which is the one that this paper adopts. Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist political theorist. He is mostly known for helping to make the word "subaltern" what it is today. While discussing the role that women from lower castes play in Indian culture, Spivak makes use of this term in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in which she poses the question. It is a term that is used to characterize groups of people who have not only had their material and economic resources taken away from them but who also have no influence on how they are depicted in culture and history.

In fact, the Palestinian catastrophe has resulted in the birth of a generation of authors whose primary goal is to protect their land, return home, declare their ancestry, and counter the fraudulent claims made by Israel. Amal's story also shows how marginalized people and groups may confront and overthrow established authorities. She utilizes both her words and her deeds to advocate for equality and liberation, and her narrative is a potent reminder of the continuing struggles of marginalized people all across the globe.

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