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The Palestinian Novel

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Compared with other national literatures, Palestinian literature in general seems complicated by the fact that it is divided into three major spaces: inside Israel, in the Occupied Territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) since 1967, and in Diaspora. As rightly argued by Salma Jayyusi, this division into three spaces started with the establishment of Israel in 1948 (Jayyusi 4-5). All three contribute their own unique features, be they thematic or aesthetic, to the whole picture of Palestinian literature. While the differences among the three are primarily spatial, they ultimately influence all other domains: political conditions, nationality, citizenship, identity, and the like. True, it is not easy to map Palestinian literature in this strictly geographic way, since many Palestinian writers are in perpetual movement, yet this division remains vital because it sheds light on the distinct conditions that shape the Palestinian novel.

Before describing each space, a brief historical survey of the Palestinian novel is requisite. The first original Palestinian novels began to appear simultaneously with other Arab novels early in the 20th century. It is commonly believed that the first Palestinian novel to appear in the 1920s after World War 1 is *Al-Warīth* (1920, The Heir; first published in 1919 in his periodical *Al-Nafais Al-'Asriyya*) by Khalīl Baydas (1874/5-1949). The second published one is *Al-Ḥayāh baʿd al-maut* (1920, Life After Death) by Iskandar al-Khūri al-Baytjāli (1890-1973).[1] In the 1930's, Jamāl al-Husayni (1893-1982) published two novels, *'Ala sikkat al-ḥijāz* (1932, On the Roaz to Hijaz) and *Thurayya* (1934). In the 1940s, Isḥāq Mūsa al-Ḥusayni (1904-1990) published his well-known novel *Mudhakarāt dajāja* (1943, Diary of a Chicken) with an introduction by Tāha Ḥussayn; Muḥammad al-ʿAdnāni (1903-1981) published *Fi al-sarir* (1946, In Bed) and ʿĀrif al-ʿĀrif (1892-1973) published *Marqaṣ al-ʿumyan* (1947, A Dance Club for the Blind). As noted, things rapidly changed after 1948.

The Palestinian Novel in Israel

In 1948, the year the state of Israel was established, the vast majority of the Palestinian people were compelled to flee their homeland, and those who remained became a national minority in a state fighting their compatriots beyond its borders. The Palestinian minority struggles to obtain what it believes it is entitled to from the Jewish majority. At the same time, they perceive the dominant majority (especially Israeli authority as represented by intelligence officers, an army of occupation, the police, and the settlers) as hostile and oppressive. This has led to unbearable feelings of confusion, alienation, loss of direction and helplessness that are expressed in the Palestinian novels written in inside Israel. The year 1967 was a decisive turning point in the life of the Palestinian people in general, and of Palestinians in Israel in particular. This war paradoxically reconnected the Palestinian minority of Israel to the other elements of the Palestinian people in the Diaspora and the Occupied Territories, and to the Arab world, leading simultaneously to a greater emphasis on Palestinian identity for the minority in Israel and on their full rights as Israeli citizens. As such, Palestinian identity in Israel is a mixture of two opposite sides, Palestinian (by culture, history, and ethnicity) and Israeli (in terms of citizenship). One explicit symptom of this process is identification with the Palestinian struggle. The Intifada was a concrete instance of this, and it played an important role in Palestinian literature in Israel. Focusing on the Intifada, Palestinian writers in Israel seek to emphasize their close connection with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. *Aḥmad, Maḥmūd wa-l-akharūn* (1989, Ahmad, Muhammad, and the Others) is a novel by Zakī Darwīsh (b. 1944) that is entirely devoted to this subject (Taha 125-44).

In his two novels *Mudhakkarāt lāji'* (1958, Diary of a Refugee) and *Bithūn* (1959, It'll Pass), Tawfīq Muʿammar (1914-88) delineates the harsh life conditions of the Palestinians in Israel as a result of the imposition on them of martial law. The author deals in depth with the consequences of the 1948 war and the establishment of the Jewish state for the Palestinian minority living there. He describes the betrayal of the Arab people by their leaders; the betrayal of the Palestinians by the British who helped the Jews; the mass flight of the Palestinians, which Muʿammar considers a fatal mistake; the policy of martial law; the expropriation of Arabs land; and more. The Palestinian minority in Israel adopted various ways of coping with this harsh reality

by developing defense mechanisms, some of which neither acceptable nor desirable to the authors who mention them in their works, but which, in fact, also helped reshape the collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel. Those defense mechanisms include: adaptation to a hostile environment which cannot be changed; patience, which might testify to stamina and thoughtful consideration; skepticism—even if cynical—is understood as caution which may even be helpful in some circumstances; struggle and resistance, which are effective in the long run since they bespeak the desire to overcome internal fear and the weakness that might gain the upper hand in situations of humiliation, discrimination, and oppression; cynicism, disparagement and mockery in the face of oppression and despotism. Those mechanisms are depicted in the novels of Emile Ḥabībi (1921-96): *Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-gharība fi ikhtifāʾ Saʿīd Abi al-Naḥs al-mutashāʾil* (1974, *The Pessoptimist*), *Ikhṭiyya* (1985, What a Pity) and *Sarāya bint al-ghūl* (1991, Saraya the Ogre's Daughter), as well as in his play *Lukaʿ ibn Lukaʿ* (1980). Ḥabībi focused on the tragic consequences of the June 1967 defeat and conveyed the ironic experience of the Palestinian refugees in their own homeland. Such an ironic situation compels Ḥabībi to make intensive use of sharp, sarcastic black humor as a best way to express the unique conditions of the Palestinians living in Israel. His most important novel, *Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-gharība*, uses humor, caricature, exaggeration, deformation, parody, the grotesque, irony, and allegory. These devices are used to define a relationship based on conflict and to dramatize a rebellion against a hostile reality. It must be noted that they are also used to criticize deficiencies and flaws of the minority itself (Taha 55-86).

Suhayl Kiwān (b. 1956) has published three novels—*ʿAṣiyy al-dam'* (1997, Tears Defiant), *Maqtal al-thāʾir al-akhīr* (1998, The Killing of the Last Revolutionary), and *Al-Mafqud Raqam 2000* (2000, Missing in Action No. 2000), and is considered the second most prominent Palestinian novelist in Israel. He deals with the Palestinians living in Palestine before Israel was established. Kiwān's characters, mostly Palestinian villagers, lead their lives in a collective and collaborative way. One of the most important themes of the Palestinian minority in Israel is the preservation of Palestinian roots, culture, and folklore. This is perceived as a defense against the threat of youngsters being tempted to adopt the Western culture of the majority, since folklore is the collective memory of the Palestinian minority in Israel. The need to stress this folklore—preservation of place names, customs, dishes, objects, dialects, accents, popular beliefs, and

tales—stems from attempts by the majority to erase this minority's national identity. To preserve traditional life of the Palestinians in Israel, Kiwān documents the time and maps the space in details. A well-known journalist, Kiwān, like Ḥabībi, expresses his views through everyday language, satire, irony, black humor, and sarcasm.

Younger Palestinian novelists in Israel have developed more ways of reshaping their identity. There has been is a decisive shift from politics, as a single leading theme, to diverse social, political, national, and personal concerns. Identity has thus become much enlarged. Sex and intimate relationships have gradually become a legitimate topic in recent novels by Rajā' Bakriyya (b. 1972). In her two novels, *'Iwā' al-dhākira* (1995, The Wailing of Memory) and *Imra'at al-risāla* (2007, The Letter Woman), she gives intimate relationships a central role beside politics, and like Saḥar Khalīfa (discussed below), she does so from a feminist perspective, but unlike Kiwān, Bakriyya uses a highly poetic feminine language to violate the traditional conventions of the Palestinian novel.

Writing in Hebrew, their "stepmother tongue," some Palestinian novelists seek to address Israeli Jews, as the major partner responsible of their concerns, directly in their own language. In *Arabeskot* (1986, *Arabesques*) Anton Shammās (b. 1950) uses many details from his autobiography to deal with his schizophrenic identity as a Palestinian Arab living in Israel by seeking a compromise. The encounter with the Jewish state, which takes Judaism as the crucial source of Israeli nationality, obliges him to reconsider his identity. Criticizing the official narrative of Israel that Judaism and Zionism jointly form the national identity of Israel, Shammās urges Israelis to find a way to include an Arab Israeli as a legitimate partner. *Arabesques* examines the impact of moving in time, from the early 1900s to the present, and in space, from Fassūṭa, an Arab village to Jewish Israeli towns and then to the USA. Since Israeli identity can by no means be detached from Judaism and Zionism, the narrator ultimately finds himself in the USA, far from his own homeland.

Identity is commonly approached as a function of time and space. While Shammas mainly focuses on his identity in terms of time ("'what I am" and "'what I was"), Sayyid Qashū' (Sayed Kashua, b. 1975), who also writes in Hebrew, seems much concerned with his changeable and shifting identity in terms of space ("where I am" and "where I was"). Two types of encounter

between Palestinians and Jews in Israel can be recognized: in the broad sense the entire national minority in a Jewish state in terms of citizenship; and in the immediate and physical sense, individuals living side by side in mixed or rather in Jewish towns. Sayyid Qashūʿ seems much concerned with second type, as Riyāḍ Baydas (b. 1960) does in his short novel *Al-Hāmishī* (1992, The Marginal). In his *Aravīm Roukdīm* (2002, Dancing Arabs), Sayyid Qashūʿ writes broadly about the dislocation, alienation and confusion of a young Palestinian boy moved from his poor village to a Jewish boarding school. Such a crucial move puts him in an impossible position, torn between two rival cultures. The new environment compels him to adopt a new identity. He has to transform much of his inherited behavior: his original accent, clothing, eating habits, and the like. Depicting the confused and fake identity of the unnamed anti-hero, Qashūʿ utilizes the humor, satire and irony. Such are the motifs of Palestinians leaving their own place for another, being exposed to the alien culture of the Jewish majority, and succumbing, one way or another, to the new culture. Things dramatically change after such activity of *leaving* and *returning*, as shown in *Va-yehī bouker* (2003, *Let It Be Morning*).

On the other hand, some Israeli Jews of Arab origin, mostly from Iraq and commonly called "Arab-Jews," insist on writing in Arabic, their mother tongue, rather than or in addition to, Hebrew, even though the number of potential readers and consumers of such novels is extremely limited within Israel. Some features common to Palestinians writing in Hebrew and Jews writing in Arabic can be observed, such as hybrid identity. Writing novels in Arabic is something closely associated with a pressing need of such Arab-Jews to express their hybrid identity (see Reuven Snir). For example, Samir Naqqash (1938-2004), who was born in Baghdad to an Iraqi Jewish family, often referred to himself as an Arab who believed in Judaism. Since he never felt at home in Israel and considered himself an Iraqi in exile, Naqqash tried several times to leave Israel, going to some Arab countries and finally to England. However, he was always returned back to Israel, as shown in his novel *Al-Rijs* (1987, The Abomination). Seeing himself as part of the great tradition of Arabic folklore and literature, he continued to publish and write in Arabic in Israel. In his novels, Naqqash represented the collective concerns of the Iraqi Jews as uprooted community from their natural milieu to a different home, from Eastern to an unfamiliar Western culture not yet ready to be part of it. In *Al-Rijs*, Naqqash includes some autobiographical details in the story of two

young relatives, a teenager and his older cousin, crossing the border from Israel to Lebanon. In this novel, which expresses Naqqash's feelings as an alien immigrant in Israel, depicts the protagonists' frustration, disappointment and maturity after their return to Israel, exactly as Naqqash himself felt when he came back to Israel following his attempts to leave.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip

Unlike the Palestinian novel inside Israel, the novel in the Occupied Territories is concerned with the Palestinian people's quest and right to be free in an independent state. Like all Palestinians living in the Gaza strip and the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967 and now cut off from it by a huge concrete wall, these Palestinian writers face a wide range of challenges: daily life under occupation, work inside Israel, the Israeli army's restrictions, checkpoints and military blockades, sieges and curfews, settlers' attacks on Palestinian population, land expropriation by Israeli authorities, interrelations among the Palestinian parties and endless disputes about the proper way to deal with the Israeli occupation, and the like. The Palestinian people in the occupied territories have been consistently undergoing radical changes on all levels, some of them directly related to the encounter with the Israelis as soldiers, settlers, employers, and ordinary people. A prominent novel concerning these changes is *Qidrūn* (1996, Qidrun) by Aḥmad Rafīq ʿAwaḍ (b. 1960). Broadly speaking, most Palestinian novelists in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip focus on the negative sides of the Israelis. Many types of Israelis are systematically represented in minute detail in *Ākhir al-ḥuṣūn al-munhāra* (2005, The Last Ruined Castle) by the young novelists Mashhūr al-Baṭrān (b. 1965), both negative, such as Dorrit and her boy friend Noʿam, or realistic and somewhat positive, such as Dov.

On the other hand, Palestinian novelists have forthrightly criticized negative manifestations in their own society. In his novel *Zaman Daḥmūs al-aghbar* (2001, Dahmus's Bleak Times), Gharīb ʿAsqalāni (b. 1948) portrays many instances of opportunism and selfishness among senior and junior Palestinian officials and administrators, some of whom do not hesitate to make use of the Intifada for their own interests. In a bold instance of self-criticism, ʿIzzat al-Ghazzāwi (1951-2004), in his novel *Al-Ḥawāf* (1993, Edges), explains serious problems in the first Intifada, including the Palestinian administrators' conceiving, planning and directing the uprising.

Above all, al-Ghazzāwi refers to the corrupt conduct of some officials who exploited the Intifada for their own interest. The same theme is introduced in several novels from diverse perspectives. For instance, 'Abdalla Tāyih (b. 1953) in his *Wujūh fi al-mā' al-sākhin* (1996, Faces [Reflected] in Hot Water), specifically speaks of the Palestinian Authority exploiting its employees. One of the most powerful Palestinian novels dealing with many facets of corruption and distortion perpetrated by the Palestinian Authority is *Uqtulūni wa Mālikan* (1998, Kill My Enemy, Even if You Kill Me, Too) by Khiḍr Miḥjiz (b. 1952). In this novel, Miḥjiz relates stories of corruption, disappointment, socio-economic and class differences, despair, bitterness, and anger. Espionage is another negative feature presented in many Palestinian novels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Exploiting the harsh conditions most Palestinians live in, Israeli intelligence tempts many Palestinians to be their agents, making them betray their own people. The most daring portrayal of this is in the novel '*Ury al-dhākira* (2003, The Nakedness of Memory) by As'ad al-As'ad (b. 1947). The author criticizes the ways many influential figures in Palestinian society exploit the sensitivity to this activity among Palestinians to compel others, for one reason or another, to admit to spying for the Israelis against their will; consequently, they are executed.

Depicting harsh reality on all possible levels, as outlined above, most novelists invent typical images of victimized characters who are often defeated anti-heroes. In most novels, the character of the anti-hero conveys two messages: the Palestinians' bold stance versus the authorities and the ugly and cruel side of the authorities, whether Israeli or Palestinian. Like all the above novels that portray images of failed characters and anti-heroes, *Jabal Nibbu* (1995, Mount Nebo) by 'Izzat al-Ghazzāwi (1951-2003) in particular depicts anti-heroes who do not have the necessary talents to achieve their dreams. Many of them die in exile before they realize their will to return to al-Sadīr, their lost homeland.

The concerns of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are intense on most levels: mundane, social, economic, national, political, and historical. Their harsh reality is graphically reflected in the novels under discussion, most prominently in the writings of the West Bank novelist Saḥar Khalīfa (b. 1942). In *Al-Ṣabbār* (1976, *Wild Thorns*) and *'Abbād al-shams* (1980, The Sunflower), she details the occupation's conduct and the consequent resistance of the Palestinians. In fact, her novels document the miserable life that the Palestinians experience

daily and highlight women's contribution to resisting the Israeli occupation side by side with men. She often depicts Palestinian characters who are confused, unable to comprehend their unique reality, and for the most part disoriented. In *Bab al-sāḥa* (1990, The Courtyard Door), Khalīfa tells the story of the first Intifada, making an obvious linkage with women's struggle against patriarchy. These two interrelated themes are actually the main concern in all Khalīfa's novels. In *al-Mīrāth* (1997, The Inheritance), Khalifa treats the Oslo agreements, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and their consequences. The concomitant gender concerns feature especially in *Lam naʿaud jawāri lakum* (1974, We Are Not Your Slaves Any More), her first novel, and in the autobiographical *Muthakkirāt imraʾa ghayr wāqiʿiyya* (1986, Memoirs of an Unrealistic Woman). Khalīfa's recent novel *Ḥubbi al-awwal* (2010, My First Love) offers another perspective of self-criticism based on clear parallelism between the self and the other, inside and outside. In this is a historical novel set in Nablus in the period 1939-48, Niḍāl (Arabic for resistance), the female protagonist, is an artist in her seventies who has returned to her "first and last house" in the West Bank from exile. Despite the occupation and the settlements, two things remain: the house and her memories of human conduct.

The Palestinian Novel in the Diaspora

Palestinian novels written in the diaspora show exiled Palestinians living all over the world as forming two groups: those living in the Arab countries and those living in the rest of the world. However, both groups display some confusion toward national identity. Are they Palestinians Iraqis or Palestinian Lebanese or Palestinian Americans, and so on, or merely Palestinians with a provisional identity? The sense of holding a provisional position enforces two major themes in the Diasporic Palestinian novel: strong feelings of nostalgia and an ongoing dream of returning to the homeland. A prominent Palestinian writer in the Diaspora is Jabra Ibrahīm Jabra (1919–1994). He was born in Bethlehem, educated in Jerusalem and at Cambridge University in the 1940s, and settled in Baghdad following the establishment of Israel in 1948. He published many novels over the course of five decades, including *Al-Safīna* (1969, The Ship), *Ṣurākh fī Layl Ṭawīl* (1974, A Cry in a Long Night), *Al-Baḥth ʿan Walīd Masʿūd* (1978, *In Search of Walid Masoud*), *ʿĀlam bilā kharāʾiṭ* (1982, A World Without Maps; co-authored with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf), *Al-*

Ghuraf al-ukhrā (1985, The Other Rooms), *Al-Bi'r al-ulā* (1987, *The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood*), *Yawmiyyāt Sarāb 'Affān* (1992, The Journals of Sarab Affan), and *Shari' al-Amirāt: Fuṣūl min sīrah dhātiyya* (1994, *Princesses' Street: Baghdad Memories*). He also wrote a novel in English, *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (1960).

Most of Jabra's protagonists experience some form of exile and alienation. Compelled to leave everything behind—past, culture, people, place—exiles not only develops intense nostalgia, but also feelings of anger, protest and resistance. These feelings permeate *Hunters in a Narrow Street* and *The Ship*. Jameel Farran, the narrator and protagonist in *Hunters in a Narrow Street*, is a Christian Palestinian who fled Jerusalem to Baghdad in 1948 to become an English teacher. *The Ship* also deals with Palestinians in exile, their internal features, memories, and uniqueness. As Roger Allen puts it, *The Ship* is about escape, exile, loneliness, suicide, alienation, and Palestine (177-95). The setting is a ship sailing from Beirut to Naples in Italy, carrying characters from different national backgrounds, including several Arab intellectuals, and this diversity constitutes of the main themes, in addition to sexual jealousies, suicides, and East-West stereotypes. The novel focuses on a Palestinian businessman's memories of a dead friend and a lost homeland. The ship at sea suggests a strong sense of no-where—no specific place of any specific people. The Iraqi 'Iṣām Salman and the Palestinian Wadi' 'Assāf are both exiles, so both persistently face questions of possible and alternative spaces. The major difference between the two protagonists is the difference between living in voluntary and forced exile. Nostalgia and a deep yearning for the past and for lost Jerusalem are woven into the narrative. "Real alienation is alienation from a place, from roots. This is the crux. Land, land, that is everything. We return to it bringing our discoveries, but as long as we hang onto the racing clouds, we remain in this fools' paradise. We are continually escaping, but now we must go back to the land, even if we are forced later to start off again. We must have terra firma under our feet" (Jabra, *The Ship* 82).

In Search of Walid Masoud is about a Palestinian author, political activist and member of the military resistance against Israel, who lived in Baghdad from 1948. He disappeared on the desert road to Syria, leaving his car somewhere on the road, with a tape recording in it recalling his memories with friends. However, the unclear tape he himself recorded makes the search for him extremely difficult. Such a circumstance reminds one of Naguib Mahfouz's short story

"Zaʻbalāwi," for the act of searching itself is the final aim of both narrative texts, searching being evidence of hope, persistence, and assertion. The question is, what do the disappearance of, and the search for, the Palestinian Walid Masoud represent? He is not any Arab intellectual; he is the one who has disappeared and for whom his friends, other Arab intellectuals, search.

Jabra's contemporary Ghassān Kanafāni (1936-72) shares with him many themes and concerns as exiled Palestinians. However, while in most of his novels Kanafani focuses on deadly and hostile nature of exile and the need for active resistance and return to the homeland, Jabra stresses memories and nostalgia. In both projects, Jabra and Kanafani, especially in the latter's early novels, expose the inner worlds of the exiled protagonists such as memories, monologues, flashbacks, first-person narrations, and detailed mapping of the space. Jabra creates primarily intellectual characters—Palestinians, Arabs, and Westerners—and analyzes the consequences of philosophical alienation. By contrast, Kanafāni shows special interest in ordinary Palestinian refugees facing a harsh reality and hostile treatment in exile. Both authors bring their characters to various tragic ends that symbolize the catastrophic conditions of living in exile. *Rijāl fi al-shams* (1962, *Men in the Sun*), Kanafāni's first novel tells the story of the Palestinians who became refugees during the *Nakba* (Disaster) of 1948. It is a story of the deadly trip of three Palestinians representing three different generations forced—for the second time—to escape the harsh conditions in the refugee camps in the hope of finding employment in Kuwait. Trying to cross the border between Iraq and Kuwait in a water-tank truck in extreme summer conditions, they suffocate and die. As in *In Search of Walid Masoud*, Kanafāni's story is about in-betweeness. On their deadly trip, the minds of Kanafāni's characters are occupied with thoughts, memories, flashbacks, fears, hopes, and nostalgia. Unlike Jabra, who views the Diaspora as something to do with personal, social, and national identity, for Kanafāni Diaspora is a matter of life and death.

Influenced by William Faulkner's novel *The Sound of the Fury*, in Jabra's translation, Kanafāni wrote his second novel, *Ma tabaqqā lakum* (1966, *All That's Left to You*). Like Faulkner, Kanafāni uses multiple narrators to tell the story from various perspectives; two of them are a clock and the desert. Using new narrative techniques, the novel is considered one of the earliest and most successful modernist experiments in Arabic fiction written in the 1960s. Like other novels by Kanafāni, this one is about displacement, exile, searching, and in-betweenness.

Broadly, about it tells of a young man named Ḥāmid who fled to Gaza in 1948, leaving his mother behind in the West Bank. This separation propels Ḥāmid on a long search for his mother. After becoming lost in the desert while trying desperately to find her, Ḥāmid is compelled to abandon his plan and instead he decides to confront his enemy, as he crosses paths with an Israeli soldier. Since Ḥāmid dies before locating his mother, he reunites with her and with his lost land in death. This process of searching for his mother represents the Palestinian passion to land, home, and family. The change from *searching* to *confronting* reflects two interrelated changes: an individual decision to overcome his inner fear and a crucial development in the political climate, namely the Palestinians' transition to armed struggle. *Ma tabaqqā lakum* paves the way for Kanafāni's third novel, *Umm Saʿd* (1969), in which he describes the general picture of the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967, its impact on the Palestinians, and the rise of their armed resistance. *ʿĀʾid ila Ḥayfa* (1970, *Returning to Haifa*), Kanafani's last published novel, tells the story of Saʿīd and Ṣafiyya, a Palestinian couple driven from their home in 1948 and tragically separated from their infant son. About twenty years later, they are allowed to visit their old home in Haifa to get whatever information they can about their lost son, Khaldūn. Broadly, in his later novels Kanafāni mostly abandoned monologues and other complex techniques for dialogues and direct narration.

Like Kanafāni, Yaḥya Yakhluf (b. 1944) has published several novels describing Palestinians' life in the Diaspora. In his well known novel, *Najrān taḥt al-ṣifr* (1981, Najran Below Zero), and his series of novels known as the Lake Tiberias novels (*Buḥayra wrāʾ al-rīḥ* [1991, A Lake Beyond the Wind], *Nahr yastaḥimm fi al-buḥayra* [1997, A River Bathing in the Lake], *Māʾ al-samāʾ* [2008, Water of Heaven], and *Janna wa nār* [2011, Heaven and Hell]), Yakhluf shows great interest in the nuances, including banal details, of Palestinian daily life in the Diaspora. He describes his demolished home in Samakh, a village near Tiberias, with a great sense of nostalgia.

Exiled Palestinian novelists have, of course, spread around the world and written in English and many other languages, but to my mind, one of the most powerful examples of such works is *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), by the Palestinian writer Susan Abulhawa (b. 1970), which was originally published in the United States in as *The Scar of David* (2006), then republished after minor edits with a new title. The novel follows four generations of the Abulheja family, starting with grandfather and grandmother Haj Yehya and Basima and their sons, from the early 1940s in

Ein Hod, a Palestinian village near Haifa, to the present day in many countries in exile. The novel has been translated into some 20 languages. The novel presents the familiar themes of the Palestinian novel in the Diaspora: harsh and hostile life in exile, loss, pain, loneliness, vagrancy, death, confused identity, and painful nostalgia. Despite being born to Palestinian refugees of the Six Day War of 1967, Abulhawa tries to tell the story of the Palestinian tragedy in as neutral a tone as much as she can. To show this neutrality and objectivity, Abulhawa, first, uses documented historical facts as raw material of the novel, blended with some autobiographic information; and second, she portrays most individual Jewish characters as sympathetic human beings, and not as ciphers or mere actants intended to play specific roles and functions. Events in the novel are commonly humanized rather than politicized. Real emotions of shame and sorrow are clearly shown in the novel for the victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York.

Conclusion

All three spaces of the Palestinian novel share some major themes related to national identity, political rights and the tension between people and communities, on the one hand, and regimes and political authorities on the other. Palestinian novelists in Israel have been forced to expand their collective identity to include Israeli citizenship as well as Palestinian nationality. One of the major differences between the Palestinian novel written in Israel and that written outside of it is that the former refers to Israel, among other things, in terms of citizenship. By contrast, Palestinian novels written outside Israel focus on the experience of refugee camps and/or exile and alienation. In sum, while the Palestinian novel in Israel deals with a complex of concerns and problems resulting from the hybrid identity of the Palestinians as a national minority who are Israeli citizens, the Palestinian novel in the West Bank and Gaza Strip deals with the serious problems resulting from the Israeli occupation and the corruption of the Palestinian authority. And the Palestinian novel in the Diaspora deals with problems relating to alienation and exile away from their people and homeland.

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[1] Ḥanna Abu Ḥanna mentions a novel entitled *Riwayat Mufliḥ al-Ghassāni* (The Tale of Muflih al-Ghassani) by Najīb Naṣṣār (1865-1948), published in Nazareth in 1981, in which Naṣṣar recorded his feeling of panic upon the Balfour Declaration (see Abu Hanna 93).

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