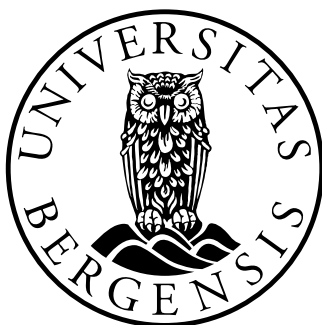


Memories of a Contested Homeland:

Nostalgia, Postmemories, and Exile in *Mornings in Jenin, Here I Am,*
and *A Map of Home*

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Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg hvordan identitet, hjem og hjemland er fremstilt gjennom ulike former av minner i moderne litteratur som, direkte eller indirekte, omhandler konflikten i Israel/Palestina. Selv om denne spesifikke konflikten fungerer som et bakteppe for diskusjonen om et omstridt hjemland, vil oppgaven ikke gå nærmere inn på selve konflikten, da det er litteraturens rolle som står i sentrum. De utvalgte bøkene – *Mornings in Jenin* (Abulhawa 2011), *Here I Am* (Foer 2016) og *A Map of Home* (Jarrar 2008) – er skrevet av forfattere med ulike perspektiver og tilknytning til konflikten, noe som resulterer i et mangfold av ulike vinklinger der flere sider av situasjonen belyses. Således utgjør denne masteroppgaven et viktig bidrag i et litterært felt som har vist tendenser til å hovedsakelig fremstille én side som det dominerende perspektivet av en kompleks situasjon der to ulike folkeslag ser på det samme området som sitt hjem.

Selv om romanene er skrevet av forfattere med ulike syn på konflikten i Midtøsten, har de til felles at de alle illustrerer hva det innebærer å ha et komplekst forhold til «hjem» og hvordan ens identitet utvikles i lys av denne følelsen, eller fraværet av den. Den tette forbindelsen mellom identitet og hjem kommer til syne gjennom de litterære karakterenes ulike former av minner, et gjennomgående tema som spiller en viktig rolle når det kommer til å skape bilder av seg selv og andre. Jeg argumenterer for at gjennom forskjellige representasjoner av minner – nostalgi, kollektive traumer og eksil – oppstår det en tendens der karakterene opplever problemer med å skille mellom egne og andres minner, noe som resulterer i fragmenterte identiteter på en evig søken etter en følelse av tilhørighet.

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Introduction

Through the novels *Mornings in Jenin* (2011), *Here I Am* (2016), and *A Map of Home* (2008), where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a backdrop, this thesis will examine how contesting ideas of home and homeland give rise to different modes of remembering – and thereby representations of – the Self and the Other, a conceptual frame that plays a key role in the construction of identities. While the modes of memories and representations appear differently in each novel, ranging from those of nostalgia, postmemories, transgenerational trauma and exile, it is important to note that there exists no absolute divide between them, as the various modes are, to various degrees, intertwined. Even as different as the three selected novels are with regards to the authors' origins and the texts' settings, plots and perspectives, the modes of representation bring forward a pattern of intractable differences in perceptions of the Self and the Other.

The authors of the selected novels discussed in this thesis, Susan Abulhawa, Jonathan Safran Foer and Randa Jarrar, all have complex relationships with the notion of home(land), which they portray through a sense of displacement and fragmentation in their characters' narratives. The novels all play out against the backdrop of a contested homeland and the construction of an imaginary homeland, inseparable from the specific conflict between Palestine and Israel. However, I want to emphasize that this thesis will *not* deal with the sociological, political nor historical aspects of the conflict. While these factors inevitably will come up occasionally as they impact the novels' narratives, they will not be discussed in depth. Rather, the focus is placed on literary representations of the idea of "home(land)," or absence thereof, in identity constructions narrated through various modes of othering and remembering. The emphasis is thus placed on literature's role in mediating conflicts, as I argue that the novels illuminate the power of cultural memories transferred through

generations and the harmful effects of presenting only one side of a story. The latter point corresponds with the reasoning of the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her Ted-talk “The danger of a single story”:

Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become (...) The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar. (2009)

In the context of discussing the dangers of reducing complex human beings and situations into a single narrative, the role of literature is unique as it has the ability to force readers to engage closely with other peoples’ experiences and values in a way no other media can:

The ordinary and extraordinary experience of literature forms part of individual adventures, in which everyone can reappropriate a relationship to oneself, one’s language and possibilities. Literary styles offer themselves to the reader as genuine forms of life, engaging behaviours, methods, constructive powers, and existential values. (Macé 2013, 213-214)

As illustrated through the analyses in this thesis, I will argue that *Mornings in Jenin*, *Here I Am*, and *A Map of Home* in various ways accomplish Marielle Macé’s point above about offering “genuine forms of life.” Through the dislocation and fragmentation sensed in the protagonists’ narratives, the three selected novels reveal aspects of growing up with complex relationships to “home” in ways that force the reader to engage and question one’s own “existential values,” as the reader’s active presence in relation to the texts allows impulses and nuances to take form. Highlighting literature’s potential in influencing readers’ understandings of fundamental aspects of life thus shows the relevance of the following

discussion of the novels, where competing memories of a contested land are set up against each other.

A Brief Overview of the Literary Situation

In the initial stages of this project, I was struck by the challenging aspect of finding novels that treated the topic I was interested in from a Palestinian American perspective. I gradually sensed an imbalance in the literary field of representing Israel and Palestine as contested homelands, as many of the novels published in the U.S. concerning this issue seemed to indicate a pro-Israeli perspective. This disproportion further peaked my interest in the subject, as I quickly learned that the tendency of literary imbalance I recognized through my research is a continuation of a long tradition of effectively silencing the Palestinian voice in U.S. popular culture. The background for the hesitation in the U.S. to recognize novels such as Susan Abulhawa's where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is narrated from a Palestinian perspective, is complex. One important factor is the U.S.' tradition of pro-Israeli sentiments where they see Israel as their loyal ally, resulting in what Edward Said has referred to as an "uncritical support of Israel and Zionism" (1981, 31, 58). He further argues that this bias has been transferred to the American popular culture, where Israeli narratives have dominated literature and screen images for decades, causing an underrepresentation and villainization of Palestinians, whose voices have not been heard (Ibid, 51).

This uneven mode of representation does not seem to have changed much since Said's time of writing, as more recent writings show evidence of the same bias (Cohen, 2014). The pattern of underrepresenting and villainizing Palestinians is also illustrated by the work of Jack Shaheen, an Arab American writer who spent his adult life specializing in addressing racial and ethnic stereotypes. When writing the book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood*

Vilifies a People, Shaheen was “driven by the need to expose an injustice: cinema’s systematic, pervasive and unapologetic degradation and dehumanization of a people” (2001, 1). It should be mentioned that Shaheen refers to Arabs in screen images, while the focus in this thesis is on Palestinians in literature. However, I argue that his work can still be applied when exploring the background for the imbalanced literary representation of Palestinians in the U.S.

The Literary Works

Chapter 1 deals with the novel *Mornings in Jenin* (2011) by Susan Abulhawa (1970-), a Palestinian American writer, political commentator and human rights activist. The novel is Abulhawa’s first and was originally published as *The Scar of David* in 2006, before Bloomsbury Publishing reissued it in the U.S. as *Mornings in Jenin* in 2011, after slight editing. Despite the initial struggles to get the novel published in the U.S., it became an immediate international bestseller and was translated from the original English to at least twenty-six languages, including Arabic. Abulhawa was born in Kuwait as the daughter of Palestinian refugees from the 1967 war¹ and spent the first 13 years of her life living with different relatives in the U.S., Kuwait and Jordan, before settling in the U.S. as a foster child. Her rootless upbringing is reflected in her novel, where major themes are displacement, nostalgia, and war. Through the narrative of the protagonist, Amal Abulheja, *Mornings in Jenin* illustrates how images of the Self and Other are handed down through generations by different modes of remembering. These images further infiltrate the characters’ perceptions of home, homeland and the ensuing creation of identities. Furthermore, the characters on each

¹ The 1967-war is mentioned in both Abulhawa’s and Jarrar’s novels through the protagonists’ narratives, as the war eventually forced Amal and Baba to leave their homes in Jenin, Palestine. After a successful military campaign against its perceived enemies (Jordan, Syria, and Egypt) in June 1967, Israel managed to gain control over new territories, including the West Bank, where Jenin is located. Consequently, the status of these territories has been a major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

side of the conflict turn their memories into unifying images that contribute to justify their claims to the contested homeland as they tend to perceive themselves as the victim and the Other as the oppressor, creating a dynamic relation that constantly affects their identity constructions and upholds the seemingly intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The novel discussed in chapter 2, *Here I Am* (2016), is written by the Jewish American author Jonathan Safran Foer (1977-). *Here I Am* is Foer's third novel, following *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), which were both critically acclaimed and turned into films. Compared to his previous bestsellers, his third novel got a more mixed reception. Unlike Abulhawa's and Jarrar's rootless upbringings, Foer has spent his life in the geographically stable surroundings of his birthplace: the U.S. While physically distanced from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Foer's role as an American Jew and his background as the grandson of Holocaust survivors make him a relevant contributor in shedding light on the concept of contested homelands discussed in this thesis. The complexity of defining the role of Israel as homeland for American Jews infiltrates the narrative of the novel's protagonist, Jacob Bloch, who struggles to detach himself from the memories of his relatives when it comes to defining himself. Similar to *Mornings in Jenin*, the significance of intergenerational transmission of trauma thus plays a key role in Foer's novel.

Chapter 3 examines the novel *A Map of Home* (2008) by Randa Jarrar (1978-), a Palestinian-American writer born in Chicago to a Greek-Egyptian mother and Palestinian father. Jarrar grew up in Kuwait and Palestine before moving back to the U.S. in her teens. *A Map of Home* is Jarrar's first novel and was translated from the original English into six different languages. The novel was an immediate success and won the Hopwood Award of literature, named one of the best novels of 2008 by the *Barnes and Noble Review*. Similar to Abulhawa, Jarrar's rootless childhood is depicted in her novel, illustrated by the sense of displacement in the narrative of the protagonist, Nidali. Compared to *Mornings in Jenin* and

Here I Am, Jarrar's novel offers new perspectives on the notions of home and homelessness, as it follows the journey of a protagonist who grows up in the rootless shadow of her father's exile. The dislocation Nidali experiences in her childhood deprives her of a collective community with shared memories, an aspect that often constitutes one's sense of belonging to a home. Not only is she deprived of this aspect because of the constantly changing communities around her, but her own family is also divided when it comes to the memories of "home." The absence of collective memories is illustrated through her parents' differing cultural backgrounds and their juxtaposing trajectories of "home(land)" to their daughter, which strengthens Nidali's uneasiness of non-belonging. While the protagonists in the other novels share her detachment and confusion of "home" to a certain degree, their conceptions of home and homeland are still tightly linked to the collective memories of the communities where they grew up, giving them an anchor to "home" that Nidali never experiences.

The absence of collective memories in *A Map of Home* affects Nidali's narrative in the sense that it focuses more on internal development and reflections than seen in the other novels where external surroundings and collective identities often overshadow individual aspects of formation. As we follow Nidali's life closely from birth to her entrance into the world of adulthood, *A Map of Home* can thus be defined as a coming-of-age story, or Bildungsroman, in a greater sense than *Mornings in Jenin* and *Here I Am*. An important factor in the Bildungsroman is the aspect of finding one's Self (Morgenstern in Hardin 1991, xiv), a process that appears as particularly complex for Nidali; her *Bildungsreise* is constantly disrupted by her father's exile through his memories and imposed trajectories to Nidali, leading to the question of whose Self she ultimately finds.

Theoretical Framework

Self and Other

One of the ways in which the authors of the selected novels offer “genuine forms of life” (Macé 2013, 214), is how they illustrate the role of the Self and Other when it comes to identity constructions, a recurring framework that influences how the characters in the novels relate to their contested homeland(s). To illustrate the interconnection between images of the Self and the Other, the work of Monika Fludernik and Derek Attridge will be applied as a theoretical framework throughout the thesis. In their works, they both stress the intertwinement of Self and Other, claiming that “identity is (...) constituted in a dialectic process that interacts with the other” (Fludernik 2007, 261) and that “something of myself (is) created *by* the other” (Attridge 2004, 23). These reasonings thus indicate that explorations of the Self depend on an interaction with the Other, here defined as “an impingement from outside that challenges assumptions, habits, and values, and that demands a response” (Attridge 2004, 32).

The role of the interaction between the Self and the Other makes the works of Fludernik and Attridge particularly relevant when discussing *Mornings in Jenin*, *Here I Am*, and *A Map of Home*, as the presence of the Other differs in each novel. In the first novel, the Other is most clearly present, leading to the creation of a constant juxtaposition of “us” versus “them.” Here, identities are created based on the dichotomy of the Self and the Other, resulting in an image of the Self as victimized by the demonized Other, which illustrates the intertwinement Fludernik and Attridge refer to. In the two other novels, this dichotomy is not as evident as in *Mornings in Jenin*. In *Here I Am*, the Palestinian Other is effectively silenced by the Jewish characters and thus appears not to exist. The absence of the Palestinians influences the Self-Other dichotomy in Foer’s novel, where various versions of the Jewish Self appear as so fundamentally diverse that these versions gradually take on traits of the

Other. In *A Map of Home*, however, the exact identity of the Other seems to be undetermined because of the protagonist's profound difficulties of defining her own Self, and the role of the Other is therefore given less attention than in the other novels.

Transgenerational Trauma

Another recurring notion that affects the characters' perceptions of home(land) and thus identity constructions, is the transgenerational transmission of historical trauma, which occurs through different modes of remembering. In *Here I Am*, and for the Israeli Jewish characters in *Mornings in Jenin*, the fundamental historical trauma affecting the characters' identity constructions is manifested in the World War II genocide of European Jews, referred to in the thesis as the Holocaust². For the Palestinian characters in *Mornings in Jenin* and *A Map of Home*, however, the historical trauma is centred around the 1948 *al-Nakba* ("catastrophe"), marking the beginning of the Palestinian displacement that preceded and followed the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948. As seen through the following analyses, these events not only affect the generations that experienced these traumas, but also the generations that came after, illustrating the effects of intergenerational trauma.

In this context, the role of the Holocaust and the ensuing collective memories that generations hand down are given considerable attention in both Abulhawa's and Foer's novels. While the Holocaust stands as the epitome for identity formation and othering for the Jewish characters in *Mornings in Jenin*, it is depicted as a consensual symbol used to unite a seemingly fragmented American Jewish identity in *Here I Am*. This issue is addressed in the

² Among others, Dominick LaCapra problematizes the use of this term by questioning how to account for different subject-positions and possibilities of transformation when it comes to understanding extreme events that may raise intractable conflicts. He further suggests that "Holocaust" should be used along with other terms such as "Shoah", "Nazi genocide" and "final solution" (2013, 4). Bearing this in mind, the term "Holocaust" will still be applied in this thesis for the sake of coherence, as this is the term used by the authors in the selected novels.

novel during the funeral of Jacob's grandfather, where the rabbi implicitly encourages a shift from what Michael Rothberg refers to as *competitive memories* and into *multidirectional memories* (in Lothe, Suleiman and Phelan, 2012). Towards the second half of *Here I Am*, one can sense this shift through the narratives of Jacob and his son Sam, who both question the role of the victimization of their own people and develop more nuanced relationships to the memories of the past. Throughout the novel, they seem to develop an understanding of multidirectional memories that reflects Rothberg's claim that "memories are not owned by groups, nor are groups owned by memories" (2009, 5). Such an understanding of memories seems to be absent in *Mornings in Jenin*. Here, the narratives are driven by competitive memories, characterized by a constant need to be the ultimate victim by using the memories of their older generations to define their roles as the victim and to position themselves against the everlasting enemy of the Other.

As illustrated, there exists a certain dichotomy between *Mornings in Jenin* and *Here I Am* when it comes to the transmission of cultural memories, fluctuating from competitive memories in the first novel and multidirectional memories in the latter. Adding *A Map of Home* to this comparison somehow seems problematic, as it is difficult to decide where Jarrar's novel fits into the discussion of collective memories. Nidali's rootless upbringing, her father's exile and her parents' differing modes of remembering "home" deprive her of the potentially unifying aspect of a shared, collective past. While Amal and Jacob grow up in the shadows of cultural memories that constantly permeate their identity constructions and feelings of belonging, Nidali must handle these struggles alone, as she grows up wondering whose memories she belongs to.

However, the concept of transmitting trauma through generations is, for some, seen as debatable, and Laurence Kirmayer for instance argues that: "establishing definite causal linkages across generations in the case of historical trauma is exceedingly difficult, perhaps

even impossible” (2014, 307). Dominick LaCapra also problematizes the role of transgenerational trauma by stressing the importance of not obscuring the difference between victims of traumatic events and others not directly experiencing them (2001, ix). In light of the following analyses of the novels, I nevertheless argue that trauma has the potential to affect later generations as some collective memories are very long-lived. This reasoning is strengthened after studying recent findings, where epigenetic processes in stress and trauma transmission point toward biological levels (McGowan, et al., 2009). Similar studies have shown that among Holocaust survivors, “those with PTSD were much more likely to have children who also developed PTSD following exposure to trauma” (Ryan et al. 2016). While these studies have been disputed by critics such as LaCapra, they nonetheless offer an important contribution to the discussion of intergenerational trauma, and a relevant source for the background of this thesis’ analyses.

Modes of Remembering

The transmission of memory from one generation to the next furthermore leads to different modes of remembering. The modes of remembering that seem most prominent in Abulhawa’s novel discussed in chapter 1 occur through nostalgia and postmemories. Throughout the thesis, the concept of nostalgia is discussed in light of the theoretical framework of Svetlana Boym and Edward S. Casey, who both argue that nostalgia is a yearning for something that no longer exists. Thus, Casey claims that the “‘world-under-nostalgement’ (as we may call it) is a lost world precisely because it is a past world, a world that no longer exists” (1987, 364), and Boym similarly defines nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (2001, xiii). Common for the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians in *Mornings in Jenin* is their strong ties to the same land and their use of memories when yearning nostalgically for a time when they lived there peacefully. However, these memories, which

are frequently summoned to justify the groups' rights to the land, often belong to older generations, as the characters tend to inherit these memories as their own. As we will see in chapter 1, this can lead to the creation of "imaginary homelands," a term coined by Salman Rushdie who claims that the physical alienation from one's homeland "almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands" (1992, 10). The tendency of creating imaginary homelands that do not exist, elaborates on the points Boym and Casey make, seeing nostalgia as a yearning for a home that never existed, except within one's imagination.

Adopting the memories of previous generations to the point that they appear as one's own modes of remembering further corresponds with the concept of "postmemories," a term coined by Marianne Hirsch:

Descendants of victim survivors (...) connect so deeply to the previous generation's remembrances of the past that they identify that connection as a form of memory, and that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event. (2012, 3)

The notion of 'postmemories' is applicable in the discussion of all three novels, as the protagonists often experience difficulties with separating their own memories from those of their previous generations. The myriad of memories often leads to confusion for the characters in their attempts to define their homeland, the Self and Other, and thus their own identity.

While nostalgia and postmemories seem to be the dominating modes of remembering in *Mornings in Jenin*, they are present in the other novels too, as the different ways of remembering are all intertwined. However, the overarching approach to memory in *Here I Am*

occurs through the intergenerational transmission of the trauma caused by the Holocaust, as the Jewish identity seems to be centred around this event. Making the Holocaust stand as the embodiment for the image of the Self creates an impression of the Jewish Self as a victimized people that rightfully belongs in the land of Israel. While such transmission of trauma undoubtedly bears a unifying potential, it also illustrates one of the dangers of postmemories, where “the past is internalized without fully being understood” (Hirsch 2012, 31). This is illustrated through the narratives of the different members of the Bloch family, as the second- and third generations of Holocaust survivors struggle to understand the implications of their shared Jewish past, because of their temporal and physical distance from the traumas of the Holocaust.

The Role of Exile

In the discussion of *A Map of Home* in the thesis’ third chapter, the overarching emphasis on representations of home and identity are filtered through the notion of exile, traditionally defined as the situation where one is “banished from one’s homeland” (Naficy 1999, 9). However, in light of modern times, where the homeland may be in ruins or manipulated beyond recognition, Hamid Naficy stresses the need for a redefinition of the concept, where the exilic state is freed from the chains of “homeland” as its referent and is rather focused on a more nuanced, culturally driven displacement (Ibid, 19). Understanding exile as a profound sense of non-belonging rather than a literal political banishment corresponds with the reasoning of Edward Said in *Reflections on Exile*, where he defines exile as a fundamentally discontinuous state of being, characterized by the feeling of not belonging (2000, 140). Interpreting the concept of exile through this lens, it can be argued that the characters in both *Mornings in Jenin, Here I Am* and *A Map of Home*, to some degree, all find themselves living in an exilic state of being. However, unlike Amal and Jacob, Nidali eventually seems to come

to term with her non-belonging as she celebrates her freedom by erasing the borders around her imposed homeland, illustrating Said's alternative way of perceiving exile as a potentially enriching motif of modern culture:

The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (2000, 147)

As the characters in the novels of Abulhawa, Foer and Jarrar tackle the challenges of living in cultural displacement differently, the novels provide valuable insights into what it means to grow up in the shadows of a contested homeland, and how different modes of remembering it influence the construction of identities and images of Self and Other. Despite their differing backgrounds and affiliations with the contested homeland of Israel and Palestine, the authors all portray a sense of dislocation and fragmentation through their literary works that illuminates the complex intertwinement of home(land) and identity, raising the question: what happens to people without a homeland?

Chapter 1: Nostalgia and (Post)Memories in *Mornings in Jenin*

Mornings in Jenin follows four generations of the Palestinian Abulheja family from 1948 to 2002, a period characterized by turmoil and violence in their homeland. The family has deep roots in Ein Hod in today's Israel, a peaceful village of olive and fig farmers. When Israel declares its independence in 1948, the peace of Ein Hod is shattered as this marks the start of the Palestinian "Nakba" (*catastrophe*) where entire communities were forced to move from their homes. This brings the Abulheja family to the refugee camp in Jenin in the West Bank, where much of the novel's plot takes place. As the young mother Dalia Abulheja tries to guide her family through the chaos of Jenin's refugee camp, the Israeli Jewish soldier Moshe snatches her youngest son, Ismael, from her arms. Moshe brings the Palestinian child back home to his wife Jolanta, a Holocaust survivor unable to conceive a child of her own. Ismael grows up as the Israeli Jew David and ends up fighting against his own people in wars to come.

Seven years after Ismael's disappearance, the Abulheja family welcomes their daughter, Amal, who is the main narrator in *Mornings in Jenin*. Amal has a relatively happy childhood in Jenin until 1967, devoting most of her time to her best friend Huda and her beloved father Hasan. But in the war of 1967, Amal's world crumbles as Hasan disappears and her mother Dalia loses her sanity. To fulfil her lost father's wish for Amal to get an education, she leaves Jenin to attend a boarding school in Jerusalem which later leads her to America on a scholarship. As Israeli-Palestinian tensions increase in 1982, Amal loses her husband, sister-in-law and baby niece in the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon, where Palestinian refugee camps were attacked by allies to the Israeli Defence Forces. Amal must then raise her daughter, Sara, by herself in America, forever haunted by the loss of her homeland and her family. After Moshe's confession years later about David's Palestinian

background, David sets out on a quest for his identity and visits his sister Amal. This shakes Amal from her stoic apathy, inspiring a return to her shattered homeland. The novel ends in 2002, during the second intifada. This was a period marked by Palestinian uprisings against Israel; leading to intensified Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Mornings in Jenin was first published in the U.S. in 2006 under the title *The Scar of David*, but it was no immediate success. In 2010, the book was reissued with the title *Mornings in Jenin* and became an international bestseller. When asked about the initial troubles with publishing *The Scar of David* in the U.S., Abulhawa explains:

Ultimately, the only reason it eventually got published with a big publisher in the US was because it got translated (...) It had to go around the world for it to be published in the United States. Even then, no mainstream US newspaper would touch it. Nobody wanted to review it. (Abulhawa, 2016)

The hesitation in the U.S. to recognize Abulhawa's novel refers to the tradition of literary modes of representation discussed in the introduction of this thesis, where the uneven portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is explained in depth. Abulhawa's persisting efforts at getting the novel published in the U.S. and her own direct address of the imbalance illustrate her attempts to humanize the Palestinian perspective and thus break the pattern of the biased Western representation of the conflict: "What Western media refer to as a conflict is, in fact, the destruction of an entire people; the erasure of their history; the removal of a distinct and named geographic and sociocultural space that has existed since early antiquity" (Abulhawa 2015). By refining the Palestinian perspective through the narratives in *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa's narrative thus bears the potential to demonstrate a more nuanced perception on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which might be a step toward a deeper understanding of both sides of the intractable conflict.

Representations of the Other and the Self

Set around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Mornings in Jenin* presents clear images of “us” versus “them,” which is an important factor for both groups’ identity constructions. By depicting others, “the protagonist and reader confront, and therefore come to terms with, the Other, but they end up by reasserting themselves against this alterity, continuing to repress and repulse the o/Other” (Fludernik 2007, 264). Fludernik here illustrates how the depiction of the Other plays a key role when constructing one’s own identity as these two factors inevitably will intertwine when we reassert ourselves against the Other. In the obstinate Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Other is always present, if not physically, then entrenched in the daily discourse, which becomes an important part of a group’s shared social culture and collective group identity (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 13). This discourse is characterized by an institutionalized stereotyping of the Other that eventually becomes so ingrained in one’s mind that many Palestinians are unable to see their Israeli Jewish counterpart as anything other than the all-powerful oppressor, in the same way that Israeli Jews struggle to see beyond their negative depictions of Palestinians (Roberts 2013, 51).

In *Mornings in Jenin*, the reader is early presented with such negative stereotypes of the Other from a Palestinian perspective through the narrative of Yehya, Amal’s grandfather. He refers to Israeli Jews by using phrases as “son-of-a-dog Zionist” and “lily-skinned foreigners with no attachment to the land” (Abulhawa 2011, 7, 46). These expressions create powerful images of evil intruders who do not belong to the land. The replacement of the well-known pejorative phrase “son-of-a-bitch” with “son-of-a-dog Zionist,” creates strong associations for the reader when hearing Zionism in this context. By commenting on the Israeli Jewish’ “lily-skinned” colour that stands out among the Arabs’ skin colour in the area, the image of non-belonging is strengthened. Combining these remarks about the Israeli Jews

creates a clear picture of them as unwanted outsiders in Palestine, both when it comes to their political and religious ideologies and physical appearance.

Stereotypes as the ones detected from Yehya's way of referring to the Other are often acquired in early years and become deeply ingrained in one's mind. Despite acquiring "contradictory beliefs" about the Other, stereotypes often continue to affect us into adult life (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 12). Such contradictory beliefs may be new ideas or angles that juxtapose one's institutionalized beliefs, making one question aspects previously taken for universal truths. This theory is challenged in *Mornings in Jenin* through the character of Ismael Abulheja, who grows up as the Israeli Jew David, oblivious to his Palestinian past. These unusual circumstances blur the boundaries between various versions of Palestinians and projections of their Israeli-Jewish counterparts, as shown when Yousef Abulheja, Amal's brother, approaches an Israeli checkpoint in 1967, where David now works as a soldier. His colleague gets sight of Yousef and tells David to "Come see this son-of-a-whore Arab" who he claims "looks just like [his] fucking twin!" (Abulhawa 2011, 105). This leads to an encounter between the two brothers, David and Yousef, who react very differently to seeing the other: «*Who the fuck are you, Arab? – How did you become a Jew, Ismael?* In the air hovered a secret David did not want to know. (...) He slapped the Arab (...) He knew not why, but now he could not stop" (Ibid). At this point, David is unaware of his Palestinian background, but his strong and violent reaction to seeing Yousef indicates a suspicion about a secret he does not want to know. Finding out the truth of what he suspects has the potential to shatter his whole existence by disturbing the boundaries between "us" and "them," which are crucial for the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish identities. Instead of pursuing his suspicions, David turns to violence and makes Yousef physically unable to tell him what he does not want to know.

In addition to David's physical violence toward Yousef, the way he addresses him illustrates David's hostility and the uneven balance of power between the two men – the Israeli Jewish soldier manning a checkpoint and the Palestinian who needs to carry ID and permission slips to move around in what used to be his land. The way David addresses Yousef is automatically derogatory as he spits out “Who the fuck are you, Arab?” Adding “Arab” at the end of the sentence indicates condescension and creates an impression that all Arabs are virtually the same, as David neglects to acknowledge Palestinians as a separate people. By referring to Yousef as Arab, David creates the Other, which primarily is an “impingement from outside that challenges assumptions, habits and values” (Attridge 2004, 32). David's vision of Yousef as the Other is challenged when discovering their similar looks, as he describes Yousef as “the one who had his face without a scar” (Abulhawa 2011, 105). The instant similarity between the two men that are supposed to belong to opposing groups seems to intensify David's deeply rooted contempt for Palestinians. The fact that Palestinians and Israeli Jews can look so similar differs from David's ingrained visions of himself and the Other and can thus be seen as a contradictory belief (Ref. Bar-Tal and Teichman). His entrenched hatred for Palestinians only seems to increase when confronted with this new information, illustrating Bar-Tal and Teichman's theory of how stereotypes that are acquired in early years continue to be stored in the minds of adults, even when they are confronted with knowledge that contradicts their beliefs (2005, 12).

Despite given the opportunity to view the Other differently after their encounter, Yousef and David never reconcile. It can be argued that David is the main obstacle to reaching a form of reconciliation, as he appears more violent, stubborn and hostile than his counterpart Yousef who is willing to reunite with his lost brother:

With the sorrow of so much gone so wrong, Yousef asked using the few Hebrew words he knew, then in Arab in case the soldier understood, “Is your name Ismael?”

(...) Violent wing-flapping butterflies cluttered David's vision and demons blew in his ears. (Abulhawa 2011, 105)

The violence that clutters David's vision and the demons that blow in his ears are a personification of his deep insecurity about his identity, brought to the surface by Yousef as he forces David to confront the secret that "had followed him" (Ibid, 105). The imagery of butterflies and demons are previously used to describe the secret of David's past as "Jolanta's butterfly wings" and "Moshe's demon" (Ibid). Respectively associated with nervousness and malevolence, the metaphors of butterflies and demons indicate a foreshadowing to something present in David's subconsciousness that he still refuses to recognize. Repeating the images that represent his parents' secret in David's mind, illustrates how the truth about his origins haunts David for decades. Yousef's sincere, but futile, attempts to communicate with David who responds with violence, puts Yousef, the Palestinian, in a more favourable light than David, the Israeli Jew. The reader immediately sympathizes with Yousef's efforts to connect with his lost brother in all the ways he can think of, only to be met with hostility and violence.

As David eventually learns the truth about his origins from Moshe, the two versions of the same character intertwine, resulting in a unique narrative where the Palestinian David and the Israeli Ismael meet. The roles of the Self and the Other are thereby reversed, leading to a meeting between the two competing narratives that exposes the story of the Other's suffering. This can "initiate a painful process that peels off layers of identity (...) hard, risky, but also a sign of hope" (Roberts 2013, 25). When David learns about his Palestinian background, we see signs of this process:

The truth encroached on his every day and spilled over into David's embedded mistrust, even hatred, of Arabs. The two truths of one man, each as true as the other, opposite of the other, repelling the other in an infinite struggle for David's soul. The

confession shook David to the core, unhinging his deepest beliefs. (Abulhawa 2011, 256)

Though implicitly, a certain religious tone can be detected from this passage by the confession that shakes David to the core and unhinges his deepest beliefs. Reading this as an isolated excerpt, one would think that David's "deepest beliefs" are tied to faith and that somehow his religiousness is challenged after being exposed to Moshe's confession about his origins. However, religious aspects are not explicitly discussed in *Mornings in Jenin*. The novel's underlying themes of "us" versus "them," homeland and identity indicate that David's deepest beliefs revolve around his general world-view and his Israeli Jewish identity, wherein religion is an embedded, but not dominating aspect.

The epiphany David experiences about his own identity after seeing the Other in himself resonates with Attridge's point that the act of welcoming the Other often leads to breaking down the familiar and the irruption of one's vision of the Other (2004, 26). When David hears Moshe's confession, the truth of his Palestinian past tears David's identity in two, showing how the new comes into being when breaking down the old (Ibid). This leaves David to question all his entrenched beliefs about the Other and the Self, which up to now have constituted his whole identity. Up to this point, everything in the novel has been polarized and categorized into good or bad, friend or enemy, Palestinian or Israeli. As seen in the excerpt above, the ingrained categorization of the world crumbles when David finds himself "somewhere between, where he belonged to neither" (Abulhawa 2011, 264). The collision of the Other and the Self causes David to question his identity and world-view, illustrating how the Other is manifested in a dynamic process that is premised on a relation (Attridge 2004, 26, 29). This relation between the Other and the Self is an infinite struggle that constantly affects one's own identity construction, showing the dynamic bond between the Palestinian identity

and its counterpart. This intricate bond is also evident when Amal and David finally meet, four decades after Yousef and David's encounter.

When Amal and David meet, they are both exposed to the Other's story. This challenges them "to respond to the singular otherness of the other person" and to abandon "existing norms whereby [they] understand persons as a category" (Attridge 2004, 33). This entails a possibility of transforming their own story, which is an important step toward reconciliation (Roberts 2013, 17). When staring at an old photograph of his Palestinian grandmother, David is overwhelmed with feelings about the suffering of the Other, which alters the story he has grown up with:

[David] looked in silence at the proof of what Israelis already know, that their history is contrived from the bones and traditions of Palestinians. The Europeans who came (...) had no old photographs or ancient drawings of their ancestry living on the land, loving it, and planting it. (...) They came to Jaffa and found oranges the size of watermelons and said, "Behold!" The Jews are known for their oranges." But those oranges were the culmination of centuries of Palestinian farmers perfecting the art of citrus growing. (Abulhawa 2011, 263)

By recognizing the Palestinian cultural and historical claims to the land, this excerpt challenges the Zionist narrative that indicates that the land was empty at the time of the Jews' arrival and that Israel has "seemingly risen from the ashes of the Holocaust" (Shindler 2008, 2). However, David presents Israel's history as being "contrived" from the Palestinians, a loaded word that indicates an uneven balance of power where Israeli Jews forcefully took what did not belong to them, from the people already inhabiting the land. The effect of David's contemplation about Israel's history is strengthened when he presents this as something "Israelis already know." David thus indicates that the Israeli Jews are living under false pretences, lying to themselves and to the rest of the world about the legitimacy of the

State of Israel. Having lived his whole life as an Israeli Jew himself, David's critique of Israeli Jews' ignorance toward Palestinian traditions and sufferings also includes himself, emphasizing the embedding effect of growing up surrounded by stereotypic remarks about the Other.

By acknowledging the suffering of the Other, David enters a minefield when it comes to his identity as an Israeli Jew. Among many Palestinians and Israeli Jews, one can detect a refusal to recognize the other part's connection to the land and thereby also their suffering, because this might lessen the validity of their own suffering and comes with political consequences:

For the Palestinians, accepting the Jewish pain around the Holocaust means accepting the moral ground for the creation of the State of Israel. For the Israeli Jews, accepting the pain of the 1948 Palestinian refugees means sharing responsibility for their plight and their right of return. (Dan Bar-On and Saliba Sarsar in Roberts 2013, 23)

Acknowledging the sufferings and memories and of the Other is thus about more than pride and stubbornness, it is about jeopardizing the foundation of one own's existence and identity. This reasoning relates to Michael Rothberg's ideas on "competitive memories" where memories are based on "a zero-sum logic" where there is only room for one group's historical narrative (2012, 332). This is a recurring tendency in *Mornings in Jenin*, where the characters on both sides of the conflict are driven by memories characterized by the need to be the ultimate victim, using the memories of their older generations to define their roles as the victim, positioning themselves against the constant presence of the demonic Other. In this context, recognizing the pain of the Other can be seen as a betrayal against one own's people. This is shown through the pejorative term "self-hating Jews" used to describe Jews who are anti-Zionist or anti-occupation (Robinson and Griffin 2017, 123). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the

concept of “self-hating Jews” is introduced for the first time when showing the consequences of David’s new perspectives about himself and the Other.

David’s new viewpoint on the Israeli Jewish identity eventually destroys his relationship with his family, which ends up tearing in two: “The truth took another toll when he told his wife (...) They eventually divorced, splitting down the middle with ideological cleavers: their eldest son (...) wanted nothing more to do with his father” (Abulhawa 2011, 256). Through this scene, we see how the question of Israel as homeland separates a whole family and forces each family member to choose sides, lacking the opportunity to find a compromise. Describing opposing views on Israel’s role as ideological cleavers illustrates the irreversibility on the matter; once you have chosen a side, you are either welcomed by or ostracized from the collective society. After learning about his past and his Palestinian relatives, David chooses to acknowledge the pain of the 1948 Palestinians and thereby acknowledges to share the responsibility for their right of return. As this puts the foundation of Israel in danger, these views are unacceptable for David’s wife and son, Uri, who both implicitly sees David as a “self-hating Jew.”

The concept of “self-hating Jews” is also illustrated through the narrative of Ari Perlstein, Hasan’s old, Jewish friend. Ari was the son of Holocaust survivors and befriended Amal’s father Hasan based on their mutual interest in books and their disinterest in politics, a combination that eventually makes his own countrymen view Ari as “the self-hating Jew” (Abulhawa 2011, 287). While Ari has no other intentions than a genuine wish to be Hasan’s friend, other Israeli Jews seem to interpret this friendship and Ari’s disinterest in politics as a political standpoint in itself. Their friendship leads Ari and Hasan to sympathize with the Other and to question images of the Self. This stands out from the victimized self-images that many Israeli Jews and Palestinians hold, as constructing and maintaining a certain self-image is a crucial part of their collective identity.

When discussing images of the Other in literature, it is important to note that representations of the Self are of equal importance, as self-identity only becomes notable when set into relief against one or more others (Fludernik, 2007, 271). When the characters in *Mornings in Jenin* contemplate their self-images, this is often set in contrast with the image of the Other. This illustrates Fludernik's argument of the complex and dynamic relationship between narratives of others and of one self, and strengthens Attridge's previously discussed point of how the Other is premised on a relation (2004, 29). In *Mornings in Jenin*, images of the Self are characterized by a sense of victimization, seeing oneself as the ultimate victim and the Other as the eternal oppressor. These victimized self-images are apparent from both the Palestinian and the Israeli Jewish perspective, an interesting tendency considering that both parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are in different ways victims of the same oppressor:

Europe – which colonized the Arab world, exploited it, humiliated it, trampled upon its culture, controlled it and used it as an imperialistic playground – is the same Europe that discriminated against the Jews, persecuted them, harassed them, and finally, mass-murdered them in an unprecedented crime of genocide. (Oz 2002, 15)

One would think that victims of the same oppressor could manage to develop a sense of mutual solidarity, but the intractable conflict shows otherwise, as the two parties end up seeing in each other the image of their past oppressor (Ibid, 16). From an Israeli Jewish perspective, this is illustrated in the following conversation between Hasan and Ari taking place in 1947-48:

“Hasan, you don't know what it was like. And now we aren't sure if we'll be safe”
(...) “I'd do anything for you or your family. But what happened in Europe...” Ari's words faded into the awful images they'd both seen of death camps.

“Exactly, Ari. What Europe did. Not the Arabs.” (Abulhawa 2011, 24)

This excerpt follows an Israeli Jewish tendency to define themselves in relation to the Holocaust as they regard themselves as “both the heir to the victims and their accuser, atoning for their sins and redeeming their death” (Zertal, 2005, 3). This is seen in the excerpt above where Ari defines the Jewish Israeli self-image as the victim and simultaneously sees the image of their past oppressor in the Other, the Palestinians. Ari’s inability to separate between the Europeans of the past and the Palestinians of today, shows how the remnants of the Holocaust still affect how many Israeli Jews position themselves towards the Palestinians, “Othering” them to maintain their own victimization.

The character of Moshe, the Israeli Jew soldier who steals baby Ismael, shows some of the same tendencies as Ari about the roles of Arabs and Europeans when it comes to the Holocaust. Moshe justifies the kidnapping of Ismael by looking back to what the Jews endured during the Holocaust: “he thought how unfair it was that this Arab peasant should have the gift of children while his poor Jolanta, who had suffered the horrors of genocide, could not bear a child. It made him weep inside” (Abulhawa 2011, 36). As genuine as Moshe appears in his desire to please his poor wife, his reasoning still seems illogical from an outsider’s perspective. As Hasan points out, it was the Europeans that caused the Holocaust, not the Arabs, thus we fail to see Moshe’s link between Dalia, Jolanta and Holocaust. However, from a Jewish perspective, these reasonings are “a response to a cruel reality” (Abdel-Malek & Jacobsen 1999, 67). The horrors of the Holocaust are so deeply ingrained in their collective identity that they fail to see Arabs as fellow victims, but rather as an incarnation of their past oppressors.

Five decades after Ari and Hassan’s conversation about the role of Europeans and Arabs in the Holocaust, Amal touches upon the same issues: “Palestinians paid the price for the Jewish holocaust. Jews killed my mother’s family because Germans had killed Jolanta’s” (Abulhawa 2011, 273). Through this narrative, Abulhawa enters a minefield when it comes to

Israeli Jewish and Palestinian identities. As she subtly criticizes Israel through the novel's plot and the characters' narratives, Abulhawa ventures into a well-known issue when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – that any criticism of the State of Israel is considered to be anti-Semitic (Butler 2012, 9). This idea has made the conflict even more intractable and shows that the Holocaust has cast a shadow over the relationship between Jews and the non-Jewish world that “has lengthened over the years” (Simon N. Herman in Abdel-Malek and Jacobsen, 1999, 74).

The focus in the previous paragraphs has been on how Israeli Jews see themselves as the victim and the Palestinians as the oppressor. However, this victimization of one's self-image and the villainization of the Other is also present from a Palestinian perspective, which is shown in the following excerpt where Amal tells the story of Haj Salem, her neighbour in Jenin's refugee camp:

in our camp, his story was 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. (Abulhawa 2011 78)

The passage illustrates how collective identities are constituted in self-narrations as the story of Haj Salem becomes everyone's story, thus the story of the Palestinian people. By constructing a story of our life, we “create continuity between past and present [and] lend meaning to the experiences that we have undergone” (Fludernik 2007, 262). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the story of Haj Salem is used to construct a collective Palestinian identity based on victimhood. However, the idea of seeing the Self as the victim is only possible because of the presence of the oppressing Other. This close connection between the self and the Other

illustrates Fludernik's theory of identity construction, thus that "identities cannot be upheld without the co-operation of others" (2007, 261).

The image of victimization is strengthened in the next sentence of the quoted passage, when claiming that "the world turned its back" on the Palestinians, cheering "the jubilation of the usurpers proclaiming the new state they called Israel." By referring to the land as what "they called Israel" rather than calling it Israel herself, the narrative of Haj Salem's story indicates a refusal to recognize the Israeli claim to the land. This illustrates one of the main issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; two juxtaposing entitlements to the same land and the failure to understand the legitimacy of the Other's historical narrative. In addition to the concepts of Self and Other, these contrasting views on home and homeland are also represented in the narrative reflections of nostalgia and memories in *Mornings in Jenin*.

Creating Imaginary Homes Through Nostalgia

Mornings in Jenin is a novel full of nostalgia and memories. This is already evident in the first sentence of chapter 1; *El Nakba*:

In a distant time, before history marched over the hills and shattered present and future, before wind grabbed the land at one corner and shook it of its name and character, before Amal was born, a small village east of Haifa lived quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine. (Abulhawa 2011, 3)

This poetic passage about longing for a time in the past when everything was better, resonates with Svetlana Boym's notions of understanding nostalgia as "a yearning for a different time" (2001, xv). Typical for this yearning is a romanticizing tendency to speak of an ideal existence in the past. This is evident in the quoted passage, which creates an image of a lost paradise where the people in the land lived happily with open frontiers and constant sunshine,

surrounded by Palestine's natural abundance of figs and olives. The quote presents a clear contrast between past and present, ominously warning the reader that the paradise that existed in "a distant time" is shattered by history and forever lost. This creates a sense of an active protagonist who aggressively marches over the land and destroys it, grabbing it at the corner and shaking it. However, the agent in this passage is not a person with its own volition, but rather history and wind – abstract factors without a conscious volition, indicating a reference to someone else. The history and the wind that shatter Palestine can thus be seen as an imagery of the Israeli Jews who, from a Palestinian perspective, aggressively grabbed the land and changed its name and character, actively destroying the paradise of the past.

In addition to romanticizing the past, Boym further argues that "nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory" (2001, xvi). This complex relationship is especially relevant when it comes to Amal, the novel's protagonist and narrator. In 1955, Amal is born into an already traumatized and displaced family that has suffered from the loss of their youngest son, Ismael, and their home to Israeli Jews who "had come to claim the land" (Abulhawa 2011, 71). Being born into this distressed and fragile family has a significant impact on Amal. In addition to her own individual sufferings, she inherits her family's collective memories and their consuming nostalgic yearning for the past. This form of transgenerational memory where the "generation after" adopts the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before, illustrates Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemories" as addressed in the introductory part of this thesis. Hirsch argues that "in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event" (2012, 3). In Amal's case, the traumas of losing Ismael and the home in Eid Hod both happen before she is born, but their effects continue into the present through the memories of her parents, illustrating Hirsch's point. Drawing a link to the earlier discussed trauma of the Holocaust for Israeli

Jews, it is evident how both peoples' trauma from the past becomes a collective trauma that is passed down through generations, illustrating one of the dangers of postmemories; the risk of having our own stories displaced by the pain of others (Ibid, 2). Through stories, images and behaviours among her family members, Amal "remembers" these experiences as her own, as they continue to shape her quest for identity throughout her life.

Amal is constantly searching for her own identity and a feeling of belonging, but deep-rooted memories and nostalgia keep overshadowing her every attempt at succeeding. After moving to the U.S., Amal claims to have "metamorphosed into an unclassified Arab-Western hybrid" (Abulhawa 2011, 173). This unusual juxtaposition gives the reader associations to a biological and animalistic process of hybridization resulting in a species that cannot be placed in a specific context. Amal's hybrid Arab-Western identity can be linked to the work of Homi Bhabha, who introduced the concept of hybridity in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994). He explains hybridization as an emergence of new cultural identities forged at the edges between civilizations, claiming that "these 'inbetween' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood that initiate new signs of identity" (Bhabha 2012, 2, 38). He further claims that a hybrid identity forms when two cultures merge and translate into one new cohesive identity, which occurs within "the third space" (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, 211). This process "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Ibid). In *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal's Arab and Western identities are in a constant struggle, as her wish to become truly American is disrupted by glimpses of her Palestinian past, pulling her back. I will return to the question of whether hybridization as Bhabha describes it in fact happen at all for Amal, given the outcome of the novel.

Amal claims to be living her life in the U.S. "free of inherited dreams" (Abulhawa 2011, 173). The idea of "inherited dreams" coincides with Hirsch's accounts of appropriating

the memories of others, showing the long-lasting effects of postmemories. As Hirsch argues and as Amal discovers, living free of inherited dreams is almost impossible as memories from the past and a wounding nostalgia keep haunting Amal: “Palestine would just rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced (...) It was a persistent pull, living in the cells of my body, calling me to myself” (Ibid, 175). This passage illustrates how powerful memories of the past can be, as they hold an overwhelming grip on Amal’s efforts to reconfigure herself and her identity. On the one hand, the memories of Amal’s past prevent her from feeling like she belongs in America, but on the other hand “[her] Arabness and Palestine’s primal cries were [her] anchors to the world” (Ibid, 179). The imagery of “Palestine’s primal cries” creates an animalistic image of an original and unbreakable bond between her and her homeland, indicating that Palestine is the only stable factor in her life that keeps her from becoming someone else. These unbreakable ties to her homeland eventually result in Amal following her grandfather’s footsteps in the attempt to return home to the place she nostalgically yearns after, a quest that she ultimately sacrifices her life for. Returning to Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, the outcome of Amal’s narrative indicates that she has failed in the process of attaining the hybrid identity. Bhabha emphasizes that in order to create a hybrid identity, one needs to enter “the third space” which “opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertain difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (1994, 5). Amal’s (post)memories of Palestine are always present in her mind and thus form a hierarchy within her identity that she is unable to escape, leading to the result that she never enters Bhabha’s idea of “the third space.” Thus, it can be argued that her process of hybridity is destroyed by her (post)memories.

Boym defines nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (2001, xiii). This reasoning indicates that the act of returning home is impossible, because the home as one remembers it no longer exists. The same idea is addressed by

Edward Casey, who claims that nostalgia “is a lost world precisely because it is a past world, a world that no longer exists” (1987, 364). However, when Amal’s grandfather, Yehya Abulheja, ventures beyond the new borders of the West Bank to visit his old home, these ideas are challenged as “he came back from his (...) paradise of realized nostalgia (...) He had returned. However brief and uncertain his return may have been, he had done it” (Abulhawa 2011, 44). By describing Yehya’s encounter with his old home as a “paradise of realized nostalgia,” it is indicated that he managed to escape “the very premise of nostalgia – that of the irreversibility of time and of the inability to revisit other times and places” (Boym 2001, 347). To some extent, Yehya’s journey home tests Boym and Casey’s accounts of looking at nostalgia exclusively as a lost past. However, the euphoria extracted from Yehya’s return is soon to be moderated and described as “an intolerable anti-climax” (Abulhawa 2011, 47). Even though Yehya physically manages to return to his previous home, he soon discovers that the land is still a lost past, as it no longer belongs to him.

The constant need to return home as seen through Yehya, corresponds to Boym’s idea of “restorative nostalgia.” Distinguishing between *reflective* and *restorative* nostalgia, the latter “stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (2001, 14). While reflective nostalgia, which thrives on the longing itself and delays the homecoming is more apparent in Foer’s *Here I Am* and will be discussed in depth in chapter 2, the focus in *Mornings in Jenin* is on reconstructing the past, signifying a constant need to return to the original stasis (Boym 2001, 60). As seen through the narrative of Yehya, the passionate urge to return home exceeds the complexity of history and the specificity of modern circumstances to the extent that it eventually kills him. This illustrates the risk of restorative nostalgia and strengthens Boym’s conclusion, that perhaps dreams of imagined homelands cannot and should not come to life and that sometimes it is preferable to leave these dreams alone (2001, 354-355).

Driven by the same restorative nostalgia as her grandfather, Amal decides to follow his footsteps in an attempt to return home three decades later. All the years she has spent in exile away from her homeland, Amal has dreamt of this moment. However, as Boym and Casey warn us, it seems that Amal has romanticized the past and underestimated the effects of time, as she searches her childhood friend Huda's eyes "to find the sense of home, which I had expected to feel in Jenin but did not (...) How unnatural it felt to pick up strands of a past I had abandoned long ago" (Abulhawa 2011, 294). After longing for returning to Jenin for decades, Amal's expected feelings of being home are absent, creating a link to the anti-climax her grandfather experienced thirty years earlier, as the land still belongs to someone else. Returning to the home that she abandoned long ago is described as "unnatural," indicating that Amal realizes, either consciously or subconsciously, the power of nostalgia; an illusion created by romanticized memories and inherited dreams of something that no longer exists and perhaps never existed for *her*. This resonates with Boym's ideas that "nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship" and once we try to force the superimpositions of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life, into a single image, "it breaks the frame or burns the surface" (2001, 9). Combining her romanticized memories of the past with the cruel realities of the present ultimately leads to the shattering of Amal's nostalgic love for her lost homeland, which strengthens Boym's reasoning about how nostalgia only can survive in long-distance relationships.

Seeing the home in Amal's nostalgic mind as something that never truly existed for her, but as rather created through inherited dreams and memories, is strengthened by her childhood account when she "conjure[s] all the places of the home that had been built up in [her] young mind, one tree, one rosebush, one story at a time [...] which [she] had visited only in [her] dreams" (Abulhawa 2011, 64). Here, we see how Amal's older family members pass on the longing for their home by telling stories and creating vivid images in her young

mind that follow her for decades. The illusion of a home based on stories from the past breaks when she is confronted with the current situation in Jenin, observing how “young men, washed clean of dreams, ran in the alleyways with rifles strapped to their bodies (...) Suicide bombers locking their belts, lovers locking their arms, little girls locking their knees” (Abulhawa 2011, 291). Visions of rifles and suicide bombers illustrate the tensions in Jenin when Amal returns during the second intifada in 2002. The word “locking” is repeated and used in very contrasting settings: in relation to the belts of suicide bombers, to arms of lovers and to the knees of little girls. This contributes to images of a locked conflict, locked memories and locked conceptions of the Self and Other, emphasising the intractable, inhumane situation. Envisioning little girls and happy lovers living alongside suicide bombers and rifles creates a powerful image for the reader, with the main impression of how inherently unnatural it is for children and lovers to be surrounded by such dangers. These horrors do not coincide with the home Amal had expected to return to.

Despite the knowledge of what her homeland has endured during her three decades of exile, Amal had still hoped to return to the same land she had been dreaming of and seems genuinely surprised when asking herself how this could have happened. This illustrates the power of restorative nostalgia, where “ambivalence, the complexity of history, the variety of contradictory evidence, and the specificity of modern circumstances are erased” (Boym 2007, 14). As a consequence, Amal’s imagination has played a great role in constructing an image of her homeland all these years, as if Jenin should be untouched by the turmoil of the conflict she knows too well. As Casey suggests, when perceiving and remembering fail us – which they always do to some significant degree – we must take recourse to imagination (1987, 367). Amal’s feeling of not belonging when she finally returns home illustrates the power of imagination when remembering her homeland, as this place no longer exists. The concept of imaginary homelands has also been discussed by Salman Rushdie, who claims that we create

invisible fictions when physical alienation prevents us from reclaiming the lost homeland (1992, 10). However, when Amal returns to Jenin, her imaginary homeland intertwines with the real homeland, which leads to the potential danger of creating a phantom homeland.

All these ideas deserve to be addressed when discussing a novel such as *Mornings in Jenin*, where the plot is founded on conflicting ideas about homeland to such an extent that one is willing to kill or die. The Israeli Palestinian conflict revolves around how the two conflicting groups “remember the land as their own, but their memories, individual and collective, are utterly different as their dreams of nationhood are bound to the same territory” (Roberts 2013, 16). This has different origins – while the Israeli Jews argue in terms of ancient history and religion, the Palestinians focus on tradition, as they can look back “forty generations of living” (Abulhawa 2011, 35). Oz demonstrates the complexity of the situation when picturing these contrasting views on the same territory as “a clash between one very powerful, deep, and convincing claim, and another very different but no less convincing, no less powerful, no less humane claim” (2002, 4). Since *Mornings in Jenin* is mainly narrated from a Palestinian perspective, there are numerous examples defending their claims to the land:

It sparks an inherent sense of familiarity in me – that doubtless, irrefutable Palestinian certainty that I belong to this land. It possesses me, no matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors (...) Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past. I am the daughter of the land, and Jerusalem reassures me of this inalienable title. (Abulhawa 2011, 140)

Amal here justifies the Palestinians’ right to the land through history and an innate feeling of belonging. The sense of innateness is strengthened by the words “roots”, “seed” and “bones” that are used to explain a bodily and ancestral link between the Palestinians and their homeland. Because these words indicate an objective, historical and biological truth, the

passage appears especially powerful and convincing. *Mornings in Jenin* lacks similar convincing accounts from an Israeli Jewish perspective, except for the traditional Zionist slogan “a land without a people, for a people without a land,” which the Jewish characters Moshe and Ari Perlstein never seem to accept. This reasoning also appears unconvincing for the reader who is thus stuck with a deeper understanding of the Palestinians’ feelings of belonging to the land than the Israeli-Jews’.

Despite the powerful role of memories when it comes to linking a nostalgic-homesick person and his or her homeland, Casey emphasizes the significance of imagining that comes to play when memories fail us, which they always do to some degree (1987, 367). Casey furthermore refers to Johannes Hofer, who claims that the deepest level of nostalgia is due to “the strength of the imagination alone” (Ibid, 367). This indicates that memories cannot be considered a sufficient factor when attempting to mend the bond between a nostalgic person and his or her homeland, thus suggesting the imperative role of imagining in this context. When imagining, we make present what is absent, which can result in the creation of imaginary homelands that often rest on narratives and memories handed down:

It may be that writers in (...) exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from [the homeland] almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands. (Rushdie 1992, 10)

Comparing Rushdie’s account of imaginary homelands and the narrative of Amal in *Mornings in Jenin* described in this chapter, illustrates how being haunted by loss and the urge to reclaim and look back may result in the creation of fiction. This corresponds with the core

idea of restorative nostalgia, where the need to return home surpasses modern circumstances in an “attempt to conquer and spatialize time” (Boym 2007, 15). Combining nostalgia, memories and postmemories with imagination, Amal thus conjures an imaginary homeland that fortifies the storying of Other and Self, factors that all contribute to define her identity.

Chapter 2: The Displaced American Jew in *Here I Am*

In *Here I Am*, we meet four generations of the Bloch family, who all have different takes on what it means to be an American Jew. The head of the family, Isaac Bloch, is a Holocaust survivor whose memories implicitly infiltrate the lives of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as illustrated in the following paragraphs. Isaac's rootless and traumatic memories from the past are revealed in the first section in the novel, foreshadowing a central backdrop to the narrative of the characters' identity constructions throughout the novel:

He had lived (...) in a hole for so many days his knees would never wholly unbend; among Gypsies and partisans and half-decent Poles; in transit, refugee and displaced persons camps

(...)

German horticulturalists had pruned Isaac's family tree all the way back to the Galician soil. But with luck and intuition and no help from above, he had transplanted its roots into the sidewalks of Washington, D.C., and lived to see it regrow limbs.

(Foer 2016, 3)

Isaac's story of how the Holocaust shattered his whole existence by eradicating his family tree and throwing him into a rootless life of the unknown differs greatly from the lives of his son Irv, grandson Jacob, and great-grandchildren Sam, Max and Benjy. Most of *Here I Am* is narrated through the protagonist Jacob Bloch's voice, a husband and father of a fracturing Jewish American family living in Washington D.C. Jacob is torn between being affected by his father's and grandfather's strong ties to the collective Jewish identity where they see Israel as the Jewish homeland and his own feelings of detachment from this collective feeling of belonging. The juxtaposition between the feelings of the older generations and Jacob's own experiences becomes evident when he questions what it means to be an American Jew,

leading to one of the novel's most central narrative plotlines. Jacob's explorations of what it means to be Jewish and the role of Israel as homeland is challenged when (in the fictional world of the novel) Israel experiences an earthquake, followed by military attacks from surrounding Arabic countries. As a strategy, Israel announces "Operation Arms of Moses" with the goal of bringing one million American Jews to Israel. These events force Jacob to question his own identity and his relationship to the alleged Jewish homeland of Israel.

Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

The younger generations in the Bloch family consist of upper-middle class American citizens worrying about domestic disputes such as strained marriages, child rearing and unsatisfying careers, which all seem rather trivial compared to Isaac's Holocaust memories. Nonetheless, Isaac's memories constantly permeate the younger family members' perceptions of what it means to be Jewish, as well as the role of Israel in this context. The power of Isaac's memories when it comes to affecting later generations corresponds with Hirsch's studies of "postmemories" in a way similar to what we saw in relation to *Mornings in Jenin*:

"postmemories" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsch 2012, 5)

In *Here I Am*, the generations in the Bloch family are differently affected by these "intergenerational acts of transfer" (Hirsch 2012, 2). Irv, the son of Isaac who survived the Jewish genocide, is a "second-generation Holocaust survivor," a term referring to the generation that comes after those who experienced the Holocaust (Van Alphen 2006, 473).

The concept supposes that “the trauma of Holocaust survivors is often transmitted from the first to second and later generations” (Ibid). However, the idea of “second-generation Holocaust survivors” has been a subject of considerable dispute over the last decades, as some scholars claim that the concept of the “second generation” is an illusion and that descendants of Holocaust survivors are such a diverse group that any generalization of their characteristics tends to be biased, thus indicating that “the process of transmission between generations is a fallacy” (Kellerman 2001, 36). Another critique of the term “second-generation Holocaust survivor” lies on the word *survivor*. Suggesting that the subject has endured a trauma that took place before its birth, the term can be seen as misleading, since one cannot survive something that has not been experienced. While bearing these arguments in mind, I will still continue to refer to Irv as a “second-generation Holocaust survivor” as he nevertheless belongs to the generation that came after those who experienced the Holocaust.

There are signs in the narrative indicating that Isaac’s past plays a larger role for his son Irv than it does to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, illustrating the transgenerational effects of trauma from parents to children. While Irv is a “second-generation Holocaust survivor,” Jacob and his sons fit into the category of “third-generation Holocaust survivors,” a term that has been disputed on some of the same grounds as “second-generation Holocaust survivor.” Whereas extensive research has been conducted on second-generation Holocaust survivors, sparse literature exists regarding the third generation (Scharf 2007, 603). However, several scholars agree that the third generation of Holocaust survivors can be seen as a continuation of second-generation survivors as most of the characteristics are continued, but gradually fade away (Aarons and Berger 2017, 5). The diversity of experiences within the third generation is even greater than in the second generation and its members often experience an “emotional and psychological unsettlement” (Codde 2010, 68). A sense of unsettlement is also present within the second generation, but is often strengthened within the

third generation, since this group is characterized by an even greater sense of incoherency because of their physical and temporal distance from the Holocaust era. The diversity and thus lack of unity within the third generation is illustrated in the narrative of Jacob as he struggles to find his place as an American Jew with an increasingly distanced image of the Holocaust and its aftermaths. As seen in chapter 1, the Holocaust has the potential to function as a unifying factor as it thrives on collective memories and certain images of the Self and the Other that bind generations together, an aspect that Jacob is never fully a part of, because of his remoteness to the Holocaust.

Growing up hearing the atrocities of the Holocaust from his father inevitably affects Irv, leading him to adopt Isaac's memories from the Holocaust in a much stronger sense than Jacob, Irv's son, does. As a third-generation survivor, Jacob seems more distanced from the collective Jewish trauma than his father, "largely because of the lack of direct knowledge and the confusions between fact and imagined reality" (Aarons and Berger 2017, 8). An imagined reality is a result of "the loss of the living link, which results in distance from the Holocaust and which results in imaginary representations" (Jilovsky 2015, 97), and corresponds to Casey's ideas discussed in chapter 1, that when memories fail us, we start constructing our own realities in our minds (1987, 367). Having no memories from the Holocaust himself, Jacob has to rely on his grandfather's transmitted memories combined with his own imagination, leading to a more distanced and strained relationship to Isaac's past than what Irv has, who has grown up hearing Isaac's stories and memories first-hand. Not unexpectedly, Irv's and Jacob's different perceptions of the past influence their visions of what it means to be an American Jew and the role Israel has in their lives, creating a gap between father and son. Irv interrogates Jacob:

"And let me also ask you: Is Israel the Jewish homeland?"

"Israel is the Jewish state."

Irv shot Jacob a look. “Of course it’s the Jewish homeland”

(...)

“You feel Galician?”

“I feel American.”

“I feel Jewish” Irv said. (Foer 2016, 232)

In this passage, it is evident that Irv’s generational sense of Israel’s role for the Jewish identity has not been fully transferred to Jacob, who seems to feel that America rather than Israel is his homeland. This illustrates the generational gap, which is often characterized by the change in how memories from the Holocaust are transmitted, thus receding from *communicative memory* and into *cultural memory* (Jilovsky 2015, 103). While communicative memory refers to varieties of collective memory that are based on everyday communication, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday, being maintained through “cultural formation (texts, rites and monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” rather than direct communication (Assman and Czaplicka 1995, 126-129). The gap between different ways of transmitting trauma from the past affects the relationship between father and son in *Here I Am*, as Irv generally seems to feel more closely connected to the collective Jewish past than Jacob does, and thus also experiences a deeper link to the concept of Israel as homeland. Jacob’s and Irv’s differing ways of relating to past trauma refer back to the discussion of “second- and third generation Holocaust survivors” as they illustrate the difference between how these generations are affected by the memories that connect them to the trauma.

Despite generational gaps in the Bloch family, the younger family members are nevertheless affected by their parents’ and grandparents’ pasts in multiple ways. Hirsch describes a phenomenon where children can hold “memories” of their parents through a process where “the past is internalized without fully being understood” (2012, 31). In *Here I*

Am, collective Jewish memories from the past become part of the younger generations' present, contributing to shape the younger generations' identities, but also to confuse and challenge them to question their own feelings of being Jewish and what this entails. This leads to realizations that may differ from the sentiments they grew up with, reinforcing the generational gap. An example of this can be found towards the end of the novel, when Jacob develops a perspective on Israel and Israelis that differs greatly from the memories passed down by the older generations that have shaped his attitudes on the matter up until now. The earthquake in Israel and its aftermaths force Jacob to question his relationship to Israel:

What was Israel to him? What were Israelis? They were his more aggressive, more obnoxious, more crazed, more hairy, more muscular brothers ... over there. They were ridiculous, and they were his. They were more brave, more beautiful, more piggish and delusional, less self-conscious, more reckless, more themselves. Over there.

That's where they were those things. And they were his.

After the near-destruction [the earthquake], they were still over there, but they were no longer his. (Foer 2016, 541)

When contemplating his relationship with the Israelis, Jacob seems torn between a feeling of repugnance and a sense of attachment. Despite describing them as aggressive, obnoxious and crazed, he still sees them as his "brothers." This juxtaposition indicates a clash between Jacob's own perceptions of Israelis and the attitudes that have been transmitted to him from older generations regarding their fellow Jewish brethren in Israel. However, after the near-destruction of Israel, we see how Jacob's visions of Israelis change. The crisis brings forward new aspects of "his people" and changes Jacob's institutionalized sentiments as he no longer sees them as brothers. After this revelation, Jacob separates himself as an American Jew from the Israeli Jews in Israel, an important shift in finding his own identity and moving away from the postmemories of his older generations. Jacob's gradual remoteness to Israel resonates with

the popular claim that young American Jews are “emotionally detached and disconnected from Israel” and “more critical of Israeli government and policies” than older American Jews. (Waxman 2017, 177). This gradual sense of detachment from Israel is confirmed in Jacob’s narration: “It’s not as if American Jews stopped caring. They continued to vacation and bar mitzvah and *find themselves* in Israel. (...) But the feeling of having arrived, of finally finding a place of comfort, of being *home*, was disappearing” (Foer 2016, 539). A sense of fragmentation can be sensed from this excerpt as Foer describes how Jacob, a third-generation Holocaust survivor, experiences the shattering and breaking off from the post-remembering of earlier generations, where Israel has been the epitome of their collective identity. Italicizing and thus highlighting the phrases “find themselves” and “home” indicates the traditional and imperative role Israel has had for previous generations, but also gives an impression of a sarcastic detachment from Jacob’s perspective as he struggles to see this correlation himself.

Despite feeling detached from Israel, Jacob still holds a curiosity about how it is to live there, referred to in the novel as “the American Jewish bloodlust at arm’s length” (Foer 2016, 243). This becomes evident when the Bloch family gets visited by their Israeli relatives for Sam’s bar mitzvah: “All Jacob wanted to talk about was living close to death: Had Tamir [Jacob’s Israeli cousin] killed anyone? Had Noam [Tamir’s son]? Did either have any stories of fellow soldiers torturing or being tortured? What’s the worst thing either ever saw with his own eyes?” (Ibid, 244). Even though Jacob seems content with his comfortable life in the U.S., the constant wondering about death and torture in Israel seems to excite him and almost functions as a pull-factor for his need to escape his own life, as he reflects: “Tamir tried not to get killed, while Jacob tried not to die of boredom” (Ibid, 224). Although Jacob claims numerous times that he views himself as an American Jew belonging in America, his interest in the dangerous lives of his Israeli relatives implicates some sort of jealousy of their fundamental beliefs, as this gives them a cause for living, which Jacob sometimes seems to

lack amid his domestic disputes. This is illustrated by a late-night conversation between Jacob and Tamir, when Tamir touches upon some of Jacob's deepest insecurities:

“People think the Palestinians are homelandless, but they would die for their homeland. It's you who deserves pity”

“Because I won't die for a country?”

“You're right. I've said too little. You won't die for anything.” (Ibid, 369)

Tamir's verbal attack where he criticizes Jacob's apathy challenges Jacob to take a stance on the matter of his Jewish identity and his alleged responsibility to help Israel during the crisis in the aftermath of the earthquake, to which Jacob responds rather evasively. He seems torn between his admiration of the Israelis' determination to fight for their homeland and his doubts of whether this case is something *he* should be fighting for, contemplating his role as an American Jew. After the earthquake and its following near-destruction of Israel, Jacob seems less torn as he experiences a vanishing sense of perceiving Israel as his homeland:

For some, it was the inability to forgive Israel's actions during the war – even a massacre or two would have been easier to accept than the complete and explicit abdication of responsibility for non-Jews – the withdrawal of security forces and emergency personnel, the stockpiling of medical supplies that had urgent use elsewhere, the withholding of utilities, the rationing of food even amid a surplus, the blockade of aid shipments to Gaza and the West Bank. Irv (...) defended Israel at every step. (Foer 2016, 539)

Despite describing a fictional war, the tone in the quoted excerpt can be interpreted as a critique of the government policies of today's Israel. When mentioning the abdication of responsibility for non-Jews and the blockade of aid shipments to Gaza and the West Bank, Foer touches upon ongoing issues that have been subject of international critique for decades.

Ending the passage by stating that Irv defends Israel at every step, Foer again illustrates the generational differences within American Jews and their perceptions of Israel as the Jewish homeland. Through Irv's persistent defence of Israel, it is indicated that he, as a second-generation Holocaust survivor, struggles to see Israel's actions as an objective outsider because he so strongly identifies with the collective Jewish group, withholding an internalized sense of belonging to Israel. This affects his perceptions of the Self and the Other, in the same way that Jacob's and his sons' detachment from Israel influences how they too perceive the Self and the Other.

Becoming the Other

The members of the different generations within the Bloch family identify with the collective Jewish group on various levels, creating interesting nuances in how they perceive themselves in relation to others. When addressing the polarized Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a Jewish perspective, "the Other" often refers to the Palestinians as the opposing group (Ezrahi in Lothe et al. 2012, 30). However, in *Here I Am*, this is rarely the case, as the novel pays remarkably little attention to the Palestinians when discussing the idea of Israel as homeland. Instead, the focus is placed on different levels within the Jewish identity which, illustrated by the narratives, is a fragmented concept for many American Jews who feel detached from the quintessential Jewish homeland of Israel. The intersections between the American Jewish Bloch family and their Israeli Jewish relatives visiting during the time of Isaac's death and the earthquake in Israel, bring forward numerous layers of the Jewish identity. Connected by a collective past and simultaneously disconnected by differing experiences of what the past means today, the narratives in *Here I Am* illustrate a different kind of Othering than does *Mornings in Jenin*, as images of the Self and the Other seem more intertwined in Foer's novel.

As discussed in the previous chapter, identities become most notable when set into relief against others (Fludernik 2007, 271). In *Here I Am*, this is illustrated when the Bloch family meets their Israeli relatives, who appear as a version of the Other because of the profoundly different experiences and values the two families hold. It is difficult for Jacob not to compare himself to Tamir who grew up with a bomb shelter in the basement while Jacob studied literature at Yale. Up until the Israelis arrive, Jacob's mind has as mentioned mostly been occupied with his marital disputes, aging grandfather and worrying about his children's wellbeing, issues that seem less important after hearing about Tamir's more dire concerns, such as whether his son serving in the Israeli army is still alive or not. Encountering his cousin Tamir as the Other thus makes Jacob contemplate his whole life:

"I'm always tired", Jacob said. "Always exhausted. I've never wondered about it before, but what if this whole time I haven't been tired at all? What if my tiredness is just a hiding place?" (...) "Or what if I can't get out of my hiding place on my own? If it's too familiar, too safe?" (Foer 2016, 414)

We see how Tamir, by telling stories of how it is to live in Israel, makes Jacob question his entrenched values and attitudes to life for the first time. This corresponds to Attridge's accounts of the Other as "an impingement from outside that challenges assumptions, habits, and values, and that demands a response" (2004, 32). In Jacob's case, Tamir functions as the outsider Attridge refers to, as Jacob starts his journey to determine what his identity entails only after encountering the Other.

Having considered the fragmented sense of the Jewish identity from the different narratives, it is still important to take into account that they are interconnected through a collective past, illustrated by the social sufferings and collective memories of trauma and displacement for the Jewish people. Several critics, among them Jo Roberts, claim that such collective memories can be an essential component in the construction of national identity and

further argues that “a nation has need of shared self-conceptions, and shared creation stories, to bind its citizens into a cohesive whole. Collective memories of past events fill this need” (2013, 15). There are several examples of such sharing of collective memories in *Here I Am*, such as the following told by the rabbi at Isaac’s funeral:

Survival has been the central theme and imperative of Jewish existence since the beginning, and not because we chose it to be that way. We have always had enemies, always been hunted (...) We’ve made efforts not to offend or be too noisy (...) We are a traumatized people. (Foer 2016, 249)

The rabbi’s speech is characterized by a strong sense of victimization of the collective Jewish past, focusing on how surviving the traumas inflicted by others stands as the epitome of the Jewish identity, echoing the Jewish narratives from *Mornings in Jenin*. The victimization creates a unified image of the Self as traumatized, which can help mend the “great divide between the Jewish/Diasporic and the Israeli modes of being” (Lothe et al. 2012, 317). This divide between Diasporic Jews and Israeli Jews refers to the fragmented sense of Jewish identity that is illustrated by comparing the different narratives in *Here I Am*, seeing how their conceptions of the Jewish identity entail multiple nuances. By consistently referring to his audience as “we,” the rabbi creates a sense of unity and belonging for the Jewish people, indicating that the past is still relevant. These sentiments have probably been repeated throughout the lives of all the generations in the Bloch family and have the function of creating a strong feeling of unity and belonging, while simultaneously illustrating the power of “postmemories” and how the loss of family, home, a sense of belonging and safety in the world “bleed” from one generation to the next (Ref. Hirsh 2012, 34). The result of this transmission of collective memories is the creation of an important link between Diasporic Jews and Israeli Jews, but also between generational gaps of Jewish identity, as collective memories create a sense of unity and a common image of the collective Self.

Without the postmemories of their older generations' past, it is hard to imagine that Jacob, and especially his three sons, would recognize the rabbi's traumatic recollections of their people's identity, living their privileged lives in the U.S. Despite having the potential to mend fragmented pieces of the Jewish identity together, the effects of making this victimization the central line in the Jewish collective memory can however also potentially be harmful, as "collective memory works selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others (...) for sometimes urgent purposes in the present" (Said 1999, 7). A more contemporary source for thinking about this is Rothberg, who touches upon many of the same issues as Said, when referring to this form of collective memories as *competitive memories* (2012, 332) as mentioned briefly in chapter 1. This term explains a tendency in many discussions of collective memory, which are "based on a zero-sum logic in which the evocation of one group's history is said to block other groups' histories from view" (Ibid, 331). The rabbi's one-sided victimization of the collective Jewish past resonates with the ideas of Said and Rothberg in the sense that he seems to offer few nuances and thereby obstructs the chances of acknowledging the stories of the Other.

Rothberg further contrasts the concept of *competitive memories* with a theory of *multidirectional memories*. The latter term refers to memories that interact productively and in unexpected ways through exploring "links between seemingly disparate times and places," blurring "the frontier between victim and victimizer" (2012, 332). This way of looking at memories rejects the proprietary relationship to the past as seen earlier in the rabbi's speech and encourages avoidance of competitive memories entailing the abjection of the Other's story. As the rabbi goes on, his tone changes remarkably as he seems to acknowledge the potential dangers that this victimization can entail:

No one could blame Anne Frank for dying, but we could blame ourselves for telling her story as our own. Our stories are so fundamental to us that it's easy to forget that

we choose them. We choose to rip certain pages from our history books, and coil others into our mezuzot. We choose to make life the ultimate Jewish value, rather than differentiate the values of kinds of life. (Foer 2016, 349)

Considering Rothberg's ideas of how memories are transmitted, the rabbi's sudden tone shift between the two quoted passages indicates a movement from competitive to multidirectional memories. The rabbi implicitly criticizes how the collective Jewish history traditionally has been transmitted between generations, reminding his audience that specific stories have been chosen as the fundamental ones, effectively entailing that other stories have been subverted. The passage can thus be seen as Foer's way of subtly pointing out the "danger of a single story" (Ref. Adichie 2009), as opposed to the acknowledgement of co-existing stories and memories. As Adichie explains: "show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become" (2009). Portraying only one side of a story thus bears the potential of strengthening stereotypes and upholding the status-que in intractable conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian. Adichie thus highlights the importance of being willing to see several sides of the same story and to look at the past with new eyes, as this prevents the dangers of the one story only. In his speech, the rabbi encourages his audience to re-evaluate their identity by shifting the focus away from the trauma from the past, which has been the epitome of the Jewish collective history for centuries: "How much greater the Jewish people might be today if instead of *not dying*, our ambition was *living righteously*. If instead of "It was done to me", our mantra was "I did it" (Ibid, 350). Through the rabbi's sermon, we see a shift in how the Self is perceived from the collective Jewish perspective as the focus moves away from victimized and competitive memories and towards more multidirectional memories, revealing how all memories and stories from the past are beyond appropriation.

As implicitly touched upon so far in this chapter, the typical black-and-white representation of the victimized Self in relation to the demonic Other we see in *Mornings in*

Jenin is lacking in *Here I Am*, as the Palestinian Other appears to be absent. In the latter novel, the images of the Self and Other are thus projected through different layers of the Jewish identity rather than on the archetypal opposition between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. On the one hand, it can be argued that the silencing of the Palestinian Other limits the chances of uncovering deep-rooted layers of identity within the Self, as this requires an encounter between the Self and the Other (Fludernik 2007, 263-264). On the other hand, the silencing of the Palestinian Other has the interesting result of positioning different nuances of the Jewish identity as both Self and Other, because the various Jewish characters we meet in *Here I Am* are so fundamentally different when it comes to values, identities and experiences that they appear as the Other, despite their quintessential common identity. This corresponds with Attridge's ideas of "otherness" as a concept that exists "outside the horizon provided by the culture" and that requires "constant challenge from the outside" (2004, 19). In *Here I Am*, this is illustrated in the encounter between Jacob and his Israeli relatives who are outside of his familiar horizon, as this meeting makes Jacob question his Jewish identity and the ensuing role of Israel as homeland in a way he never has done before. His Israeli relatives thus appear as the Other, which fortifies the earlier argumentation where the Self-Other dichotomy between the various Jewish characters is seen as an encounter between the Self and the Other. Furthermore, the fracturing of the Jewish Self into different versions of the Other due to the absence of the Palestinians indicates a link to the backdrop of contesting ideas of the same homeland, as the silencing of the Palestinian Other eradicates this group's rights to the land and thus reinforces the Israeli Jewish justification of their belonging to Israel.

The Silencing of the Palestinian Other

Throughout the almost 600 pages in *Here I Am*, Palestinians are only mentioned a couple of times, most often through remarks that barely acknowledge their existence. This remarkable

silencing of the Other is rare when addressing issues such as Jewish and Israeli identity constructions and the role of Israel, as the roles of the Arab as the “implacable enemy” and “demonic other” have traditionally played a great role when unifying Jewish memory (Ezrahi in Lothe et al. 2012, 302). As previously discussed, this unification is often achieved by upholding certain images of oneself as the victim, while constantly being suppressed by the victimizing Other. The absence of this traditional juxtaposition in *Here I Am* deserves to be discussed in depth, as the creation of absent presences potentially involves an attempt “to undo the past via fiction and keep history at bay” (Codde 2011, 674). It can thus be argued that the silencing of the Palestinian Other is just another a way of achieving the effect of unification.

In the narrative, Irv mentions “the so-called Palestine” (Foer 2016, 139), a formulation that indicates a refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Palestine’s existence and thereby the Palestinians’ belonging to the contested homeland. The strategy of undermining the Palestinians’ right to exist links the novel to political ideas that Palestine and Palestinians do not exist, demonstrated by the previously Israeli prime minister Golda Meir’s famous quote: “There is no Palestinian people” (1976). The silencing of the Other can thus be seen as both a textual and political strategy to achieve a sense of unification, emphasising the larger role of literature as discussed in this thesis’ introductory section. In the novel, the indifference towards the Palestinian Other becomes especially apparent in the following conversation between Irv and Tamir:

“And what about the situation?” Irv asked.

“What situation?”

“Safety.”

“What? Food safety?”

“The *Arabs*”.

“Which ones?” (Ibid, 242)

It is clear to the reader that when asking about the *situation* and *safety*, Irv refers to the issues between Israeli Jews and the Palestinians, but he is either unable or unwilling to express these words. Tamir, on the other hand, also refuses to acknowledge their presence by pretending not to understand what Irv refers to. By using the broad term *Arabs* that consists of multiple nationalities, rather than *Palestinians*, Irv manages to project an image of them not belonging in Israel, and thus simultaneously undermining their sense of belonging to Palestine. Rather than explicitly talking negatively about the Other, as seen in chapter 1, Irv and Tamir infer their views implicitly, which has a surprisingly strong effect in the process of silencing. Irv and Tamir thus continue what Roberts refers to as the Israeli tradition of not mentioning Palestinians, ensuring that “traces of centuries of Arab presence becomes invisible” (2013, 24). This tradition of silencing the Palestinian Other is based on efforts to create a shelter from a traumatic past and security against a similar future, where there is no room for anything that might threaten that – including the story of the Palestinians (Ibid, 17).

The tendency of refusing to refer directly to the opposing part as seen through the narratives of Irv and Tamir is not unique, as “the “Palestinian-Israeli conflict” itself is being increasingly referred to by all sides as a “Condition,” hardly amenable to human resolution (Ezrahi in Lothe et al. 2012, 302). Tamir’s and Irv’s evasive attitudes towards the issue indicate an indifference to the plight of Palestinians rather than seeing them as the demonic Other. On the one hand, the invisibility of the Other deprives the Jews in *Here I Am* of an aspect that could potentially bring together pieces of a fragmented Jewish identity, as illustrated in the discussion of *Mornings in Jenin*, where both sides of the conflict are unified through set images of the Other as the enemy. On the other hand, the Blochs and their Israeli

relatives seem to share the idea of pretending that Palestinians do not exist in Israel, creating much of the same uniting sentiments by agreeing on this absence.

With reference to the French philosopher Levinas, Butler argues that there exists an “infinite” connection between the Self and the Other, and that the constitution of one’s own identity relies on this encounter (2012, 39), echoing the works of Fludernik and Attridge. The “infinite connection” indicates an unescapable link between the two concepts and creates an image where the Self-Other dichotomy is always present and intertwined. However, this infinity “only makes itself known through the face, the face of another person that bears within it an infinite demand” (Butler 2012, 39). These ideas were first addressed by Levinas, who explained this infinite demand as an innate obligation to preserve the life of the Other: “What one sees in the face is (...) the general demand of any person ‘not to let him die alone, as if to do so were to become an accomplice in his death. Thus the face says to me: you shall not kill’” (Levinas in Cohen 1986, 23). In the Israeli-Palestinian context, this obligation means that acknowledging each other brings with it ethical obligations to preserve the *existence* of the Other, and the face of the Other is therefore understood as an imposition. However, when the characters in *Here I Am* make the Other invisible and thus “faceless,” it can be argued that this obligation disappears. Irv’s and Tamir’s non-acknowledgement of the Palestinian Other can thus be seen as an attempt to escape the ethical responsibility toward the Other and thereby preserve their virtuous image of the Self.

The silencing of the Palestinians further functions as a unifying factor when the novel’s Israeli prime minister launches “Operation Arms of Moses,” where he urges Jews of the world to fly home and defend their motherland:

“To the Jews of the world, those who came before you – your grandparents, your great-grandparents – and those who will come after you – your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren – are calling out: “Come home.”

“Come home not only because your home needs you, but because you need your home

“Come home not only to fight for Israel’s survival, but to fight for your own

(...)

“Come home not because you agree with everything Israel does, not because you think Israel is perfect, or even any better than other countries. Come home not because Israel is what you want it to be, but because it’s *yours*.” (Foer 2016, 454)

The rhetoric in this passage puts emphasis on an innate link between diasporic Jews and their quintessential homeland, Israel. The clear message is that Israel belongs to the Jews, and the Jews only. This excludes the Palestinians living in Israel, and by not mentioning them, the prime minister’s speech functions as a way of demonstrating that they do not belong there, or even that they do not exist, aligning with Levinas’ ideas of seeing the Other as an imposition that entails a demand to preserve their existence. The Israeli Prime minister further equates Israel’s survival with the survival of Jews all over the world, indicating that the destruction of Israel would lead to the death of Judaism. This innate bond between diasporic Jews and Israel is put to the test when Jacob must decide whether he should comply with the prime minister’s call:

“Israel isn’t my home, Tamir.”

“That’s only because it hasn’t been destroyed yet.”

“No, it’s because it isn’t my home.”

“But it’s *my* home,” he said. (Foer 2016, 418)

Through this conversation, a clear discrepancy between the cousins’ views of “home” comes to the surface. Jacob finally takes a clear stance on the role Israel has in his life and positions himself differently than his father and cousin do, who both seem convinced of the inextricable bond between Jews and Israel. In addition to distancing himself from the views of his family

members when it comes to Israel, Jacob also places himself differently when it comes to notions of the Other. Despite growing up hearing Irv's, Isaac's and Tamir's derogatory and evasive remarks about the Palestinian Other, Jacob does not seem to share their views about Palestinians, as he never makes such statements, nor does he seem to support their views. Rather than agreeing or disagreeing, Jacob seems to be more assertive on the matter by being a quiet bystander to their remarks. This may be Jacob's way of disagreeing, because he knows that it is futile to object to his strongly opinionated father and cousin. However, his neutral stance may also be a way of indicating his struggle to position himself and his identity when it comes to the question of Israel as the Jewish homeland and thus also his feelings toward the Other. Jacob's difficulties with positioning his identity leads to a sense of displacement that may correlate to his role as a third-generation Holocaust survivor and strengthens the previously discussed aspect of the incoherency within this group, often leading to feelings of detachment and fragmentation. Because of his temporal and physical distance to the era of the Holocaust and the foundation of Israel, Jacob shows an advantage over Irv and Tamir to approach the issues with more objectivity and composure, echoing the generational gaps among the nuances of Jewish identity.

The sense of displacement and fragmentation in Jacob's narrative is more clearly present through the narrative of his son, Sam, who is even more distanced from Holocaust and its aftermaths than his father is:

And he, Sam, was always longing. What was that feeling? It had something to do with loneliness (his own and others'), something to do with suffering (his own and others'), something with shame (his own and others'), something with fear (his own and others'). (...) It was the feeling of being Jewish. But what was that feeling? (Foer 2016, 339)

With the death of his great-grandfather Isaac, Sam's communicative link to the Holocaust era is gone, resulting in a transition from communicative memories into cultural memories. The cultural memories transmitted to Sam seem to confuse rather than to clarify his efforts to define his Jewishness, a process that is characterized by feelings of loneliness, suffering, shame and fear, indicating a certain sense of fragmentation. Sam's sense of displacement is further strengthened by his inability to decide who these feelings belongs to. Combined with the parenthesised repetition of "his own and others," the word *and* seems to collapse Sam with others. His feelings of displacement thus seem to strengthen when encountering and comparing himself with others, fortifying the sense of displacement and thus lack of unity and a common understanding. Comparing the different narratives in *Here I Am*, it seems as the ability to understand the role of past is weakened in each generation, a tendency that correlates to the transition of communicative memories into cultural memories.

It can be argued that the displacement Jacob and Sam experience is rooted in a discrepancy between understanding the past and its role in the present, which corresponds to Hirsch's previously mentioned claim that often, when it comes to intergenerational transmission, "the past is internalized without fully being understood" (2012, 31). Illustrative of this is Sam's reflection above where he struggles to separate his own feelings from others', and Jacob's inability to position himself as an American Jew when confronted by Irv and Tamir, as fragments of cultural memories influence their identity construction in a way they struggle to understand and control. Common for Jacob and Sam is the feeling of being excluded from a world they were never a part of, as memories from a past they do not fully understand keep infiltrating their present, leading to suffering and an unidentified desire:

Those Jews who have come late upon the scene, burdened by their posthumous life, infatuated by an irreparable nostalgia for a world from which they were excluded on

being born, feel a vertigo when confronted by the time “before,” the lost object of a nameless desire, in which suffering takes the place of inheritance. (Fresco 1984, 421)

Nadine Fresco’s thoughts on how suffering takes the place of inheritance resonate with the narratives of both Sam and Jacob. Because of their incapacity to understand the postmemories of their older generations, they are also unable to inherit these memories. As a consequence, past memories appear as fragmented pieces of identities that result in a sense of displacement, and thus suffering for Jacob and Sam. Fresco’s ideas of an “irreplaceable nostalgia” and a “nameless desire” for an unknown world further correspond with Boym’s notion of reflective nostalgia mentioned briefly in chapter 1. Unlike Amal’s restorative nostalgia and the ensuing desire to restore the past by returning home, Jacob shows signs of reflective nostalgia, which “dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging” and “thrives on algia (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming” (Boym 2007, 13). The ambivalence of longing and belonging is a central backdrop to the narratives in *Here I Am*, as the characters are constantly longing after the feeling of belonging, without knowing exactly what this entails or how to achieve it, thus delaying the homecoming. Tamir’s and Irv’s silencing of the Other may contribute to strengthen Jacob’s and Sam’s sense of being excluded from a world they were never a part of, as the absence of the Palestinian Other is yet another aspect they were never included in and which they do not understand, leading them to form own reflections of otherness. This illustrates another aspect of reflective nostalgia in the sense that “it reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection” (Boym 2007, 15). The combination of shattered fragments of postmemories and the abilities to reflect critically, leads Jacob and Sam to develop an everlasting desire to *belong*.

Because of the different degrees of traumatization and exposure towards the Other in *Mornings in Jenin* and *Here I Am*, the characters’ views on nostalgia and the ensuing

desire to return “home” also differ. While Amal is constantly driven by restorative nostalgia, characterized by a need to re-establish the past and return to her home in Jenin, Jacob delays the homecoming as much as possible, illustrated by his evasiveness to return to his alleged homeland of Israel after the earthquake. Because of Amal’s entrenched images of the Self and the Other and her (post)memories of Palestine as “home,” she experiences a more urgent desire to return home than Jacob does, as he struggles to define the location of “home” in a way Amal never does. This juxtaposition between Amal and Jacob’s views on returning home corresponds with Boym’s distinguished versions of nostalgia: “While restorative nostalgia returns and rebuilds one homeland with paranoid determination, reflective nostalgia fears return with the same passion” (2007, 15). Jacob’s ambiguous feelings of returning “home” to Israel must be seen in light of his profound incapacity when it comes to defining his homeland, emphasising the sense of displacement that permeates his narrative as an American Jew.

Chapter 3: (Be)Longing and (Dis)Location in *A Map of Home*

Exile and the Coming-of-Age Process

A Map of Home (2008) by Randa Jarrar is a coming-of-age tale, telling the story about a girl named Nidali and her life in Kuwait, Egypt and the U.S. Set during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait in the Gulf War with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a larger backdrop, the novel explores notions of home and identity while depicting Nidali's transition from youth to adulthood. Focusing on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist, Nidali, *A Map of Home* can be characterized as a Bildungsroman, where character change is of essential importance. The Bildungsroman "narrates the acculturation of a self – the integration of a particular "I" into the general subjectivity of a community" (Redfield 1996, 38). The development of Nidali's Self is central in the novel, both when it comes to the individual Self and a sense of the collective Self. The story is loosely autobiographical, as the writer, Randa Jarrar, also grew up in Kuwait and Egypt, before moving to America soon after the Gulf War. Like her fictional protagonist, Jarrar is also the daughter of an Egyptian-Greek mother and a Palestinian father, a background that shapes the development of Nidali's Self and her ideas of home and homeland in the novel.

Like the protagonists in *Mornings in Jenin* and *Here I Am*, Amal and Jacob, Nidali's narrative in *A Map of Home* is also characterized by a complex relationship to the notion of "homeland." This influences how she defines herself and how others define her, seen through the recurring question Nidali gets when moving to a new place: "Where's home at?" (Jarrar 2008, 223), to which Nidali has no clear response. Despite their homes sometimes appearing unattainable, absent or even unwanted, Amal and Jacob nevertheless define their homelands as the place where they grew up with their closest family, Palestine and the U.S respectively.

Nidali, on the other hand, does not share their experiences of remembering one specific place as where she spent her childhood, having lived in Boston, Kuwait and Egypt before settling in Texas in her teens. Nidali's rootless childhood throws her into a constant sense of unsettlement that follows her attempts to define herself from her youth to adulthood in the coming-of-age story in *A Map of Home*. While the protagonists in all three novels struggle to develop a sense of a particular "I," Amal's and Jacob's integration into the surrounding community, and thus development of a sense of a collective "I," is less problematic than it is for Nidali, because they have the advantage of a more geographical stable environment than what we see in *A Map of Home*, despite that they are living under constant pressures. Nidali's efforts to develop and define herself are thus complicated by the lack of stable surroundings that could have had the potential to integrate Nidali's Self into a collective unit, which could have eased her identity formation.

In addition to her rootless childhood that deprives Nidali of the feeling of belonging to a collective group, her father further seems to complicate her transition from youth to adulthood as he constantly disrupts her attempts to define herself, through his notions of Palestine. Forced to permanently leave his Palestinian homeland after the 1967 war, Baba is thrown into a lifetime of exile, which affects his family and their relationships between themselves. The word "exile" "suggests a painful (...) banishment from one's homeland [and] implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political, that makes the home no longer safely habitable" (Naficy 1999, 19). Affected by the trauma of losing his childhood home in Jenin, Baba desperately tries to project his nostalgic yearning for his homeland to Nidali: "Baba said that moving was a part of being Palestinian. 'Our people carry the homeland in their souls,' he would tell me at night as he tucked me in. This was my bedtime story when I was three, four" (Jarrar 2008, 9). Baba's formulation of how "our people" always bear their Palestinianness in their souls seems to include Nidali and appears as an encouragement, or

even expectation, that she should do the same. Despite Baba's efforts to convince Nidali of her Palestinianness from an early age, his efforts seem futile, as she looks back at her only visit to Palestine: "I'd visited this homeland once, noticed that there was a lot of grass, several rocks and mountains, and thousands of olive trees and donkeys" (Ibid). Nidali's recollections consist only of visual observations and show no signs of emotional attachment to the land, strengthening the impression of Baba's unsuccessful persuasion, as she thinks to herself "That's such a heavy thing to carry" (Ibid), misinterpreting Baba's notion of carrying his homeland in his soul. Nidali's formulation of "*this* homeland" (my italics) illustrates her lack of attachment and further demonstrates how Nidali is unable to relate to Palestine as yet another "home." Baba's and Nidali's differing understandings of Palestine as "home" is rooted in Baba's exile, where "the home is specifically located in a homeland" (Naficy 1999, 19). For Nidali, however, the idea of "home" does not rest on a specific location but merely on what Boym calls "a sense of intimacy with the world," entailing the feeling of knowing "that things are in their places and so are you; it is a state of mind that doesn't depend on an actual location" (2001, 251). Connecting this reasoning to Nidali and Baba, none of them seems to be feeling at home. Their different perceptions of where "home" is and what the feeling of being "home" entails create a gap between father and daughter that seems to widen each time Baba tries to transmit his nostalgia to his daughter, illustrating how Baba's exile interrupts Nidali's attempts to belong in her various surroundings.

While exile is about "suffering in banishment", it is also about "springing into a new life" (Boym 2001, 256). Boym refers to this leap as "a gap, often an unbridgeable one; it reveals an incommensurability of what is lost and what is found. Only a few manage to turn exile into an enabling fiction" (Ibid). Baba's refusal to let go of his lost homeland and the ensuing projections onto his daughter illustrate the gap Boym refers to, as Baba only seems to focus on what he has lost, diminishing the potential of what he finds. Baba's exile thus leads

to a gap between his past and presence, but also to a gap between father and daughter, who never reach an agreement on where or what “home” is. The discrepancy of his lost homeland and his new reality as a stranger living in exile functions as a disabling force for Baba, who seems to reach the realization of exile that Boym refers to: “objects and places were lost in the past and one knows that they can be lost again. The illusion of complete belonging has been shattered” (Ibid, 255). Despite his numerous attempts at creating new homes for his family, Baba seems burdened by an awareness of hopelessness that he gradually passes on to Nidali. After settling in her temporary home in Egypt while waiting for the family’s return to Kuwait, Baba breaks Nidali’s hopes of a homecoming: “We were not returning to Kuwait. We were not wanted there; no Palestinian person or family with a Palestinian member was (...) My father’s work permit had been revoked indefinitely” (Jarrar 2008, 191-192). This passage refers to the 1991 Palestinian exodus from Kuwait during the Gulf War, when around 200 000 Palestinians were forced to leave Kuwait, a response to the alignment of PLO leader Yasser Arafat with Saddam Hussein. Being expelled from Kuwait, where Nidali spent most of her childhood, marks the beginning of her exile from the place she knows as ‘home’ and leaves her family with “the inevitable, only choice: [Baba] would look for a job in America” (Ibid, 200). When arriving in Texas, where Baba manages to get a job, Nidali demonstrates the same sense of detachment as Baba did earlier: “I was missing a hundred different things from “home”, and the sad part was, I was starting to forget what they were and where home really was” (Ibid, 221). The sense of displacement in Baba’s and Nidali’s narratives corresponds with Boym’s idea of “diasporic intimacy”, which is “rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging [and] haunted by the images of home and homeland” (2001, 253). Despite their disagreement when it comes to the location of “home,” Nidali and Baba share the sense of longing without belonging. However, rather than functioning as a

uniting factor, their longing widens the gap between father and daughter, as both are unwilling, or unable, to understand the other's longing.

The title of the novel, *A Map of Home*, refers to the root of Baba's longing; the absent home of Palestine. While Baba continues to idealize Palestine as a principle that defies practical realization, Nidali resists her father's obsession with the idea of Palestine as an idealized haven and thus seems to reject the imposition of the national homeland. Their differing views on Palestine are illustrated in the following conversation, where Baba tries to convince Nidali that Palestine "stood in the center of the world," to which Nidali responds: "On the map, sure, it was the center, but wasn't the world round? I'd worry sometimes about Baba, who built buildings and was a grown man. Didn't he know that any point could be the world's center?" (Jarrar 2008, 223). Nidali's objective and scientific response to Baba's metaphorical claim about Palestine being the world's center again illustrates the gap between them and their relationship to Palestine. While Palestine appears to be the essence of Baba's identity, it is merely a place on the map for Nidali, illustrating their different understandings of Palestine as home.

When contemplating her national identity and views on homeland, Nidali says: "I was split in half: I was Egyptian and Palestinian. I was Greek and American" (Jarrar 2008, 8). Even though she does not necessarily see Palestine as her homeland, her Palestinian roots are given considerably more attention in the novel than her Greek, Egyptian or American ancestry. The most apparent reason for this is Baba's constant reminders of her Palestinianness, which inevitably affect how Nidali sees herself. While Baba persistently tries to convince Nidali of her Palestinian roots, the same cannot be said about her Greek-Egyptian mother, who never attempts to project her nationalities to Nidali in the same way as Baba does. Although never explained in the novel, the reason for her parents' differing views on homeland and the following projections to their daughter may stem from Baba's involuntary

exile, which Nidali's mother does not share, as she is allowed to return to her homeland(s). Thus, they are placed differently within "the field of mobility": "the question is who moves and who doesn't; who has control of their movements and who doesn't" (Massey in Naficy 1999, 157). Because Baba is forbidden to return to Palestine and thus lacks control of his opportunities to move, he seems to feel a greater need to convince Nidali of her Palestinian roots than Mama does, because his memories is the only thing that connects him to his lost homeland. Seemingly afraid to lose the idea of Palestine, Baba literally "dictated history to [Nidali]" and "made [her] trace the map [of Palestine] and draw it over and over again" (Jarrar 2008, 66, 68). A natural consequence of her parents' differing views on homeland and their ensuing trajectories on to Nidali is thus that she focuses more on her Palestinian side because this is imprinted from Baba every day.

In addition to influencing how Nidali perceives her roots from the past, Baba also affects her choices for the future. As long as Nidali can remember, her father has constantly emphasized the importance of getting a proper education, so that Nidali can achieve the dream of becoming a doctor, a dream that Nidali does not initially seem to share:

"No," he answered for me, "you don't want to be like them. You want to be free." I nodded. I wanted to be free. I wanted to throw off my shoes and pants and go play in that fountain over there. "Well," he said, "to be free, you must be educated. So you must do excellent work, always. That way, you can finish every year of school possible, including a doctorate." Doctor? I thought of the blue hospital room and shuddered. My neck felt bare and cold again. "I don't want to be a doctor," I said. "I hate hospitals." "You'll be a doctor of words, silly. Do you like words?" I thought for a moment and finally shrugged. "It depends on the word." (Jarrar 2008, 24)

Through this passage, we see how Baba projects another one of his longings to Nidali; the dream of reaching academic success, which he never managed to achieve himself. At seven

years old, Nidali's idea of being "free" is the opportunity to go play in the fountain, while Baba's vision includes her getting a doctorate. Baba's plan for Nidali follows her throughout the novel, and he explains the importance of education by linking it to the absence of a home: "I lost my home," Baba said (...), "and I gained an education ... which later became my home" (Jarrar 2008, 106). As Baba continuously disrupts Nidali's sense of belonging through his harpings on Palestine, his views on the importance of an education also gradually infiltrate Nidali's visions for the future, as Nidali later contemplates: "School had been my only constant since I was a child. Mother, homeland, self, that could all be taken away, but school? School remained" (Ibid, 254). Nidali's thoughts on education now sound alarmingly similar to those of her father years earlier when explaining how his education eventually became his home, illustrating the power Baba has over Nidali and her choices for the future.

At the end of the novel, when Nidali ecstatically leaves her family to attend college in Boston, she finally seems to have found a sense of her true Self. However, her decision to pursue an academic career in literature, which her father started to imprint on her mind at the age of seven, makes the reader wonder which version of the Self she has developed – her own or Baba's? When explaining the process of transition in the Bildungsroman, James Hardin stresses that this process should be self-generated: "In contrast to the concept of education, however, *Bildung* was supposed not just to come from outside mentors but also to represent a process of self-development" (1991, 109). Thus, despite external pressures and "struggles with the hard realities of the world" (Ibid, xiv), the transition from youth to adulthood is one that is supposed to focus on "self-formation based on the potential of freedom" (Ibid, 232). However, for Nidali, this internal process is constantly disrupted by her father's notions of her quintessential homeland Palestine and his dreams for her academic future, illustrating how Baba, as an "outside mentor" interferes with Nidali's *Bildungsreise*; her "journey into self-knowledge" (Ibid, 58). Even though Nidali believes to have found *herself* and pursuing *her*

mission by attending college, her version of the Self appears as an echo of her father's voice throughout her life, which demands some form of emulation, explaining why her Bildungsreise becomes so fraught. It can thus be argued that, subconsciously, Baba's exile affects Nidali's transition into adulthood to a such a degree that it creates a speculation of whether Nidali's version of the Self in fact is her own or her father's.

The Self Through the Eyes of the Other

Nidali's journey of finding her Self must also be seen in light of the role of the Other, as the differentiation between these two concepts is at the core of identity construction (Fludernik 2007, 263-264). The characters in *Mornings in Jenin*, and to some degree in *Here I Am*, early internalize shared images of themselves as the victim and the Other as the oppressor. Such collective perceptions of the Self and Other contribute to a sense of belonging to a community that shares the same values, which is an important factor in the notion of feeling at home (Terkenli 1995, 325). In *A Map of Home*, however, the dichotomy between "us" and "them" is lacking, which deprives the characters of a fundamental aspect "to shaping personal place in the world" (Ibid, 326). The reason behind the different levels of juxtaposition of Self and Other in the novels can be explained partly by looking at the characters' backgrounds. While the Palestinian characters in *Mornings in Jenin* have a strong community feeling where they perceive their family, friends and neighbours as part of a collective Self that constitutes their identity, the characters in *A Map of Home* have never experienced this feeling of belonging to a collective. Even Jacob in *Here I Am*, who does not necessarily agree with all aspects of the Jewish Self that are projected to him by his relatives, still feels that he is a part of a collective community in a much larger scale than Nidali does. Unlike Amal's and Jacob's parents who feel a strong sense of belonging to "their people," Nidali's father refuses to settle in Kuwait's Palestinian ghetto, as he "didn't want to live with his own because he never felt like he

belonged with them” (Jarrar 2008, 59). This estrangement is, according to Said, a common aspect of living in exile where one develops “a passionate hostility to outsiders, even those who may in fact be in the same predicament as you” because “what you achieve is precisely what you have no wish to share” (2001, 178). Baba’s separation from his Palestinian peers appears as a sharp contrast to Amal’s feelings of belonging in *Mornings in Jenin*. Like Baba, Amal leaves Jenin shortly after the 1967 war, but unlike Baba, Amal constantly feels “a sweet nostalgia and longing for old friends” (Abulhawa 2011, 175). While Amal looks back at certain memories of people from her childhood that reassure her of her Palestinianness, this specific nostalgia is lacking in the Baba’s narrative. Although he clearly sees himself as Palestinian, Baba seems more obsessed with the idea of Palestine itself, rather than with the sense of *belonging* to Palestine, which is prominent in Amal’s narrative. Their differing views on the Palestinian homeland may be connected to the varying presence of the Other in their narratives, as “humans define themselves relative to the other. (...) Individuals define and redefine their lifeworlds as home by assigning the unfamiliar or the foreign to “them,” the other, whoever they may be, and by creating a distance between the two sides” (Terkenli 1995, 326). Because Amal grew up in a community where the borders between “us” and “them” were integral for a collective identity of the Self, her ties to the (Palestinian) homeland are stronger than they are for Jacob, Baba and Nidali, who have not been a part of this juxtaposition that contributes to a feeling of belonging to a certain place called home.

Baba’s lacking ties to the Palestinian community further enable him to avoid the stereotypic victimization and demonization that often characterize those entrenched in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as seen most clearly in *Mornings in Jenin*. His passiveness in relation to the traditional images of Self and Other in this context is transmitted to Nidali, who thinks to herself: “I was amazed by this Israel and its power, and I asked Baba if we were Israeli since he is from Palestine which is the same as Israel” (Jarrar 2008, 68). Her

perspective on the inflamed situation in her father's homeland indicates an innocent unawareness. The formulation "*this* Israel" (my italics) indicates that it is the first time she hears about the idea of Israel and shows the same sense of indifference as when she visited Palestine and referred to it as "*this* homeland." Genuinely convinced that "Palestine is the same as Israel," Nidali's wonderings seem completely stripped of any bias, demonstrating that her father has not transmitted the traditional polarized junctions of Self and Other to his daughter. Because of this, *A Map of Home* does not convey the same space of dichotomies as seen in the previous chapters. Even though Baba seems bitter about losing the opportunity to build a permanent home for his family in Palestine, he never directly seems to blame the Israelis for his exilic destiny, illustrating an important distinction between the novels.

Baba continues to reject the stereotypic notions of Self and Others when Nidali claims that "Arabs are so emotional" to which Baba responds: "it's racist to say that Arabs on the whole are emotional" (Jarrar 2008, 203). This rejection of stereotyping ethnicities appears as a strong contrast to what Nidali later experiences in the American high school classroom:

He was Palestinian and she was dating a black kid and working at a drive-thru, and so her insane baba killed her" ... "I felt sad for the girl, as I'm sure everyone else did. Then, out of the blue it seems, Mrs. Ruben (...) asked me to stand up and say a few words about my Palestinian dad. It took me a few moments to register if she was trying to make the class understand that not all Palestinians were bad or if she was simply reducing me to my Palestinianness. Either way I hated her. I couldn't imagine her bringing in a statistic about a black or Latino criminal then asking a black or Latino kid to stand up and defend his entire race. (Jarrar 2008, 273)

The idea of comparing Nidali's father to the "insane baba" that killed his daughter's boyfriend solely because they are both Palestinian, is an abjection to Nidali because it reduces her and her family to an ethnicity that she does not even feel a part of. Feeling obliged to defend "her

entire race,” Nidali experiences the situation as unjust because the images she has of herself and her family do not correlate with how others see them. Looking at herself through the eyes of others thus conjures a double-consciousness³ for Nidali, where the image she has of herself and her family gets blurred by perceiving this image through the eyes of others. The sense of a double conscience is, according to Boym, one of the main features of exile and explains how “exiles and bilinguals were always treated with suspicion” (2001, 256). This sense of suspicion toward Nidali and her family is not only apparent through Mrs. Ruben’s degrading image of Nidali’s Palestinian father, but also through her parents’ difficulties with getting jobs and a mortgage in America. For Nidali, who deeply desires “to be like everyone else” (Jarrar 2008, 103), the double consciousness appears as a psychological burden. Her attempts to propitiate her various identities haunt Nidali in all her homes and are further strengthened when she sees herself through the eyes of others.

After having spent her childhood years in Kuwait and Egypt feeling alienated because she is “split in half,” Nidali soon discovers that in her new home, Texas, “everyone was half one thing, half another” (Jarrar 2008, 219). Rather than feeling comforted by this discovery, Nidali is surprised by her own reaction: “I thought this would make me feel at home but instead I was sad that I was no longer special” (Ibid.) When discovering that the people around her share the feeling of being split by mixed backgrounds, the borders between the Self and the Others are blurred, which confuses Nidali. Despite the lack of belonging to a collective group, Nidali has, up until now, identified herself as distinct from her surroundings and has thus developed a certain image of the Self as special in opposition to Others. When this juxtaposition fades, Nidali loses her one constant attribute – alienation – and is forced to re-evaluate her identity. These experiences correspond with some of Boym’s ideas: “Instead

³ This notion of «double consciousness» does not refer directly to WEB DuBois’s idea of double consciousness. However, the two concepts are related since they both deal with the idea of seeing oneself through the eyes of another.

of curing alienation (...), exiled artists use alienation itself as a personal antibiotic against homesickness” (2001, 258). Up until her sense of alienation disappears in Texas, Nidali has been unaware of her ability to transform this feeling into something positive that abjures her homesickness, but when confronted with her new surroundings, she seems to realize that alienation has in some ways helped her to cope in her various homes.

Despite being used to living in exile as a bilingual in Egypt and Kuwait, Nidali experiences these traits as obstacles in a stronger sense when moving to America, as her accented English emphasizes her feelings of being an outsider. Boym argues that “bilinguals have frequent problems with self-translation, either because of different languages occupy different mental strata or because there are strange conjunctions between them that the person cannot easily disentangle” (2001, 257-258). Bullied by her American friends for “talking like she’s on public radio,” Nidali nostalgically looks back to her life in Egypt, where her “Egyptian language was full of songs and lilts and catchy phrases” (Jarrar 2008, 225). Being unable to express her humour and personality accurately through the English language frustrates Nidali because it disables her from projecting her true Self to her new surroundings, pointing to the issues raised by Boym. Tired of these cultural and linguistic barriers, Nidali thinks to herself: “I wished, then and for many months later, that I would translate the way I was, my old way of being, speaking, and gesturing, to English: to translate myself” (Ibid). Nidali’s urgent desire to transform her old Self into the cultural frames of her new surroundings may be seen in light of her absent homeland and the ensuing need to belong somewhere.

Nidali’s wish to translate herself can also be traced back to the ideas behind *Bildung*, where an essential factor in the formation process is “the search of self and of one’s proper place in society” (Hardin 1991, 229). Finding one’s place in a certain society often requires adapting to existing norms, customs and language. However, because Nidali and her family

are frequently forced to move, the societies around them constantly change, which results in an uneasiness of non-belonging that interferes with Nidali's process of finding her "proper place in society". While Nidali desperately tries to adapt to the American culture, she is still painfully aware of her non-belonging: "Even in my fantasy I looked like a geek, and I was terrified of never fitting in" (Jarrar 2008, 201). Nidali's fears of not living up to the ideal look and never fitting in are universal dreads for teenagers all over the world and is a common part of the transition from youth to adulthood, where one is particularly vulnerable. However, Nidali's experience of these worries is strengthened because of her rootlessness that has deprived her of feeling like she belongs anywhere, intensifying her desire to fit into the American society, which now constitutes as her home. Furthermore, her "bushy eyebrows," "puffy brown hair," and "lanky arms" (Ibid) appear to Nidali as clear indications of her non-belonging in the U.S., illustrating that once again, her Bildungsprozess appears as unusually difficult, rooted in her absent home.

The Intertwinement of House, Home, and Homeland

When discussing the notion of belonging in Nidali's narrative, it is natural to also address the concepts of house, home and homeland, as these notions are closely connected to the idea of belonging. Of the three concepts, *house* is the easiest to define, as it refers to the literal object, the material place in which one lives (Naficy 1999, 5). Furthermore, *house* has often traditionally been equated with *home*, a comparison that seems misleading in light of the novels' narratives where the concept of *home* is far more difficult to entangle than *house*. While a house refers to a spatial object that can be temporary, built and rebuilt, a home refers to a deeper sense of affiliation and settlement: "The essence of home lies in the recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify

through some measure of control” (Terkenli 1995, 325). The key significance of a home is thus not the location, but rather the feeling it gives its inhabitants; a sense of safety and control. While Nidali is never houseless, it can be discussed whether she is at *home* in her various houses, as she often lacks these feelings. The concept of *homeland* is further intertwined with *home*, as they are both often personal, complex and difficult to disentangle: “homeland is the country-sized space of home, of kin and belonging, and therefore of sentimental unity” (Strehle 2008, 2). Nidali’s difficulties of defining and disentangling *home* and *homeland* diminish her opportunities of belonging and illustrate the close intertwinement of the two concepts.

Throughout the novel, Nidali’s father tries to keep his memories of Palestine intact by projecting his nostalgic feelings about his homeland onto Nidali by making her “trace the map [of Palestine] and draw it over and over again” (Jarrar 2008, 68). Baba seems obsessed about the geographical location of Palestine on the map until late in the novel, when Nidali questions this. He then admits that the map Nidali has drawn “is from a certain year. The maps that came earlier looked different. And the ones that came after, even more different (...) There’s no telling where home starts and where it ends” (Ibid, 193). In this passage, Baba points to a situation that he shares with generations of Israelis and Palestinians, who “have grown up without borders demarcating (...) where Israel ends and Palestine begins” (Ezrahi in Lothe et al. 2012, 300). This absence of borders has created “an increasingly invisible space” (Ibid) that in the novel seems to fuel Baba’s obsession of making Nidali memorize the location of Palestine on the map in order to keep his memories intact. However, as previously discussed, his efforts are futile, as Nidali rejects the imposition of the Palestinian homeland, due to her lacking emotional ties. Terkenli sheds light on Nidali’s inability to perceive Palestine as her homeland solely through maps and drawings by explaining that “home is a multidimensional and profoundly symbolic term that cannot be mapped as an exclusively

spatial concept” (1995, 327). These ideas correspond to Boym’s previously addressed idea that the feeling of belonging to a home or a homeland is a state of mind that does not depend on a specific location. Thus, memorizing the geographical location of Palestine is not sufficient when her father tries to make Nidali see Palestine as her homeland, because she lacks the sentimental value of the land Baba refers to.

Although Terkenli acknowledges that “home has been defined first and foremost as a spatial context,” she emphasizes that home, also connotes “social and habitual conditions” (1995, 325). Because of Nidali’s father’s exile and the subsequent turbulent surroundings during the Gulf War that force her family to constantly change homes, she never experiences the social and habitual feelings of control that Terkenli refers to, which affects her perceptions of home. However, when her new friends in Texas asks Nidali “Where’s home at?”, Nidali replies “Egypt. And Kuwait” (Jarrar 2008, 224). Because Kuwait and Egypt are where Nidali has spent most of her time, she seems to view these places as her home(s), rather than her quintessential homeland, Palestine. Nidali thus associates Kuwait and Egypt with experiences of social and habitual involvements, which influence her feelings of belonging in a stronger sense than the spatial location of Palestine that she knows only through maps and stories. This confirms both Terkenli’s and Boym’s notions of home as a place of sentimental values and experiences rather than a geographical location of ancestry.

When confronted with the question of her Palestinian identity, Jarrar once answered:

I think the only way to define Palestinian universal identity is to say that there is no such thing. Meanwhile, I don’t necessarily think of myself as Palestinian. I don’t pretend to have suffered the way my relatives in Jenin have; or the way Palestinians in Gaza suffer today. (In Danah, 2010)

Reading *A Map of Home* in light of Jarrar's own thoughts on identity, it is not surprising that the novel is not primarily a nostalgic yearning for the Palestinian homeland. Rather, it is about the process of homebuilding when arriving at new places, as the novel's characters are forced to redefine their ideas of home and homeland in various contexts. Settling in her third home, Texas, Nidali "wondered how long that home would hold us, how long that home would last" (Jarrar 2008, 279). The sense of displacement in Nidali's narrative appears as an echo of her father's unsettlement through the novel: "How can I [find a home] when I've never had one?" (Ibid, 200). Despite always having had a place to live, thus a house, Baba still sees himself and his family as homeless, demonstrating the difference between these two concepts, which lies in the feeling of being home. Rather than a nostalgic longing for Palestine, Nidali's and Baba's narratives thus appear as a general longing to belong anywhere, a desire that seems more and more futile for each time they are forced to move.

As a consequence of their exilic existence, Nidali and her family are living in a discontinuous state of being, which is often seen as a site of estrangement and entrapment. While the exile that causes the family to live as migrants has so far been treated as a disadvantage that breeds a sense of detachment and non-belonging, Said argues that living in exile can sometimes also be transformed "into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture" (2001, 137). The discontinuous state of being can thus also be seen as a dynamic situation of change that creates an aura of freedom that non-exiles do not have:

The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (Said 2001, 185)

Said's perspectives on exile suggest a more nuanced representation than most scholars, who have a tendency of viewing exile primarily as a site of non-belonging and entrapment. By

viewing permanent homes surrounded by borders and barriers as prisons, Said offers a new way of looking at Nidali's homeless existence, as her lack of borders enables her to escape this prison-like existence. While people who reside permanently within their familiar borders often defend their homes "beyond reason or necessity," Nidali has the opportunity to perceive borders and barriers differently, as she narrates:

I took the map I drew to my room, flipped my pencil and brought the eraser's tip to the page. I erased the western border, the northern border. I erased the southern and eastern border. I surveyed what remained: a blank page, save for the Galilee. I stared at the whiteness of the paper's edges for a long, long time. The whiteness of the page blended with the whiteness of my sheets. "You are here," I thought as I looked at the page and all around me. And oddly, I felt free. (Jarrar 2008, 193)

While her narrative up until this point has been characterized by a quest of finding a sense of being home as a result of the uneasiness of non-belonging, this passage shows how Nidali celebrates her non-belonging within set boundaries. Her coming to terms with her betweenness, thus reconciliation with having no home, brings forward a sense of freedom after erasing the borders around her, which is only possible because of the absence of a permanent home enclosed by set borders. Erasing the borders leaves Nidali with a blank page and thus a clean slate, bringing forward a newfound sense of freedom that illustrates Said's arguments about how living in exile can be seen as enriching rather than estranging.

However, even though the whiteness and the removal of borders on the map free Nidali from the confines of her father's imposed homeland, it is important to bear in mind that she does not literally float freely among her different homes. She is still, because of her Palestinian background, banned from returning to Kuwait, which is the only home she has known (Jarrar 2008, 166). It must therefore be recognized that Said's perspective on exile is not about understanding exile as a *privilege*, but rather seeing it "as an *alternative* to the mass

institutions that dominate modern life” (Said 2001, 184). Nidali’s new perspectives on her absent home and the ensuing lacking borders make possible a “plurality of vision [that] gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” (Ibid, 186). Her multicultural experiences in her various homes thus bring forward a plurality that resonates with what Boym claims is the main feature of exile: “A double conscience, a double exposure of different times and spaces, a constant bifurcation” (2001, 256). While this constant double conscience most often functions as a disabling force where the focus lies on the non-belonging aspect of the absent home, Nidali’s realization of her borderless existence enables her to realize that “home” remains in fluidity and can be built as a process rather than as a literal home, which brings forward new horizons.

Unlike Nidali, who manages to see the liberating advantage of homelessness where the homeland becomes portable, her father’s stubborn memories of Palestine seem to function as an anchor to his home(land) that deprives him of feeling “home” anywhere else. Illustrative of this is Baba’s longing for home, which he expresses through a sense of reflective nostalgia, which is closely connected to individual and cultural memory (Boym 2001, 49). While Amal in *Mornings in Jenin* demonstrates a deep desire to reconstruct the past through her restorative nostalgia where the focus is on the homecoming, Baba “does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home” (Ibid 50). Similar to Jacob in *Here I Am* who also shows signs of reflective nostalgia, Baba’s nostalgia “thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming” (Boym 2007, 13). He realizes that rebuilding his Palestinian home is futile, both because of his exile and because “the home is in ruins or (...) renovated and gentrified beyond recognition” (Ibid). Despite this realization, Baba is unable to let go of his lost home(land) as he sees “everywhere the imperfect mirror images of home, and try to cohabit with doubles and ghosts” (Ibid, 251). This notion of doubleness corresponds to the previously mentioned aspect of exile that brings forward a “double exposure of different times and

spaces,” leading to the sense of a “double destiny” (Ibid, 256). While this sense of a double destiny may be an enabling force, as seen through Nidali’s erasure of the borders on the map that gives her a feeling of freedom and control, it also often appears as disabling. An inevitable aspect of bearing a “double destiny” is the feeling of partaking “a half destiny” (Ibid), as one always feels out of place. Nidali’s double- and half destinies illustrate how the exilic existence limits her choices of being whole and thus decreases her opportunities of belonging to one place.

Conclusion

The authors of *Mornings in Jenin*, *Here I Am*, and *A Map of Home* are all familiar with various shapes of displacement rooted in complex relationships to their home(land)s, which they portray through their literary works. While the protagonists in the selected novels, Amal, Jacob and Nidali, have different backgrounds, experiences and memories, their narratives are all characterized by a sense of dislocation that shapes their quest for achieving the feeling of belonging to a “home,” which serves as a backdrop in all the narratives. For a large part, the characters’ senses of dislocation stem from different modes of remembering the past and the intertwinement between the ideas of the Self and the Other, which constantly infiltrate and disrupt their efforts at belonging. The various memories illustrate a constant struggle between the past and the present that affects, and sometimes even intensifies, the characters’ feelings of living in displacement, as the haunting presence of the past constantly challenges their self-perception. An important distinction between Amal on the one hand, and Jacob and Nidali on the other, is the way memories shape their relationships to the homeland and the ensuing desire to return. Combined with the collective postmemories of her family, friends and neighbours, Amal’s own memories of her home make up a powerful component that forever ties her to her home in Jenin and subsequently disrupts her attempts at belonging in America. For Jacob and Nidali, however, there exists a juxtaposition between their own memories of “home” and the collective memories of the *alleged* “home” of Palestine and Israel respectively that are transmitted to them by others. Through the (post)memories of their various family members, Jacob and Nidali thus develop complex relationships to a “home” they have no real memories of themselves, which intensifies their sense of displacement and somehow alienates them from both their alleged homes and the new homes they are trying to build. These juxtaposing memories consisting of several versions of “home” stand in contrast to Amal’s unified memories of Jenin and leaves her as the only one who knows where

“home” is. This might also explain why she is the only one out of the three protagonists who develops a sense of restorative nostalgia that prompts her homecoming.

A reoccurring notion in all three novels is the fundamental need to belong. Through the analyses, it becomes evident that the sense of belonging is closely tied to notions of house, home and homeland, which are intimately intertwined with one another. This intertwinement further bears on conceptions of personhood and exile, as exile always involves a “home, or a homeland, as referent” (Naficy 1999, 9). Since the traditional definition of exile has had its focus on “political expulsion and banishment” from home (ibid), it can therefore be discussed whether the protagonists in the novels live in exile. Especially Jacob in *Here I Am*, who is physically and politically free to reside in both his homelands, America and Israel, does not seem to fit into the classical definition of exile. Likewise, Amal in *Mornings in Jenin* voluntarily leaves her home in Palestine to pursue an education in America and is thus not literally expelled from her homeland. For Nidali in *A Map of Home*, on the other hand, the notion of exile is particularly difficult to untangle, as the referent of a home(land) most often appears as unidentified and thus absent in her narrative. However, in our own times, where the referent of home(land) may be “in ruins or in perpetual manipulation” (Naficy 1999, 9), Naficy argues that the concept of exile is now “freed from the chains of its referent” (Ibid).

This destabilization has led to a redefinition of exile, from the traditional expulsion and banishment from a defined location “to a more nuanced, culturally driven displacement” (Ibid). In light of this understanding of exile, one might argue that Jacob, Amal and Nidali all find themselves living in a form of exile, characterized by their constant sense of displacement. Common for all three protagonists is a complex relationship with the notion of home(land) that leads to an uneasiness of non-belonging that strengthens the conclusion that they all, to various degrees, live in a constant exilic state of being. Their experiences of living in exile are affected by their various versions of memories that constantly infiltrate their

present, for as Said explains: “Since almost by definition exile and memory go together, it is what one remembers of the past and how one remembers it that determine how one sees the future” (2000, xxxv). The characters’ different modes of remembering thus illuminate various ways of living in and with this dislocation, whether traumatic, as for Amal who sacrifices her life for the sake of returning home, confusing, seen in Jacob’s narrative where he is forced to take a stance on where he ultimately belongs, or liberating, illustrated by how Nidali manages to turn her absent home into an enabling force of freedom.

Inextricably linked to exile, memories and displacement is the notion of the (im)possible homecoming, which serves as a backdrop in all three novels. Exile has been described by Victor Hugo as the “long dream of home” (in Simpson 1995, 1) and by Salman Rushdie as “a dream of a glorious return” (in Naficy 1993, 17), illustrating the close link between exile and the hopes of returning. Comparing the narratives in the novels discussed in this thesis, the need to return home seems most urgent for Amal, whose attempts at settling in America are constantly disrupted by her “Arabness and Palestine’s primal cries” that function as her “anchors to the world” (Abulhawa 2011, 179). Amal’s ties to Palestine ultimately prove so strong that she sacrifices her life for the sake of coming home, illustrating the devastating outcome of her unbearable exile. For Jacob and Nidali, however, the feeling of homesickness is not strong enough for them to break out of their exilic state of being, because their ties to their alleged homelands do not appear as their “anchors to the world” in the same sense as for Amal. Despite the fact that the literal homecoming seems absent in the narratives of Jacob and Nidali, they constantly dream of another form of homecoming, a kind that does not depend on an actual location, but rather on a “sense of intimacy with the world” (Boym 2001, 251), and thus, the feeling of being “home.”

In addition to being linked to various modes of remembering, the characters’ different ties to “home” are also deeply affected by how they perceive images of the Self and the Other,

as this differentiation plays a key role when constructing identities (Fludernik 2007, 263-264). Compared to the fragmented identities of Jacob and Nidali, Amal is the only one out of the three protagonists who grows up with inherited images of the Self as the victim and the Other as the oppressor, which create a clear dichotomy between “us” and “them.” This juxtaposition contributes to a sense of belonging for Amal, who, unlike Jacob and Nidali, is a part of a unified group with a collective identity and a shared adversary in the Other. This collective identity ties her closer to her home in Jenin and further explains her urgency to return, which is ultimately a need to unite the sense of her individual Self with the collective Self in order to feel whole. Nidali and Jacob, however, are exposed to various versions of the Self and the Other that do not correlate in the same way as for Amal, as these images appear as confusing rather than clarifying. In their narratives, images of the Self and the Other appear as fragmented, contested and intertwined, depriving Nidali and Jacob of the feeling of belonging to a united group. Especially for Jacob, the constant silencing of the Palestinian Other seems to strengthen his sense of displacement. His efforts at taking a stance of the concept of “home” are complicated by his relatives’ attempts at convincing him of his Israeli ties, which seem less persuasive because of their refusal to address the Other.

The silencing of the Palestinian Other in *Here I Am* can furthermore be tied to the tradition of silencing the Palestinian perspective in public discourse and in popular culture. As discussed in the introductory part of this thesis, the popular culture coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict aimed at a Western audience was biased and uneven for a long time. While some scholars, like Elsa Marston (2004), claim that the situation has improved, the difficulty of finding novels that treat this conflict from a Palestinian-American perspective tells another story, as the Israeli perspective still seems to dominate a large part of the available literature translated into English. Although an increasingly amount of “pro-Palestinian” novels are written, some still struggle to get published in the U.S., accused of

being biased, racist and one-sided (Gibbons 2003), illustrating the link between literature and public discourse. As briefly touched upon in chapter 2, the silencing of the Other in *Here I Am* may be a way of achieving the effect of unification for Jacob's Israeli relatives, as the refusal to acknowledge this group's existence can be seen as an attempt to escape the ethical responsibility toward the Other (Levinas in Cohen 1986, 23) and thereby uphold their traditional image of the Self as the victim who belongs to the land of Israel. This narrative strategy can be seen as a continuation of the traditional pro-Israeli sentiments in the U.S. where the voices of Palestinians have been silenced for decades for the same reason as in *Here I Am*; thus, to form an image of those people that belong in the contested land of Israel and Palestine. Continuing to examine the connection between literary tendencies and public discourse, Abulhawa's difficulties of publishing *Mornings in Jenin* in the U.S. further illustrate the complexities of figuring the Palestinian homeland, as her attempts to humanize the Palestinian perspective "had to go around the world for it to be published in the United States" (Abulhawa 2016).

The various narratives in the three selected novels discussed in this thesis where several perspectives of a contested homeland are illuminated, contribute to break the pattern of "the single story" where complex human beings, situations and historical pasts are reduced into a single narrative (Ref. Adichie, 2009). The dangers of exposing only one side of a story that inevitably has multiple perspectives entail the strengthening of stereotypes and the upholding of the status quo in intractable conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian. By illuminating and humanizing various angles of the story of a homeland contested, Abulhawa, Foer, and Jarrar offer important contributions to the literary coverage of the precarious situation in the Middle East, illustrating literature's potential to influence readers' perspectives on the seemingly intractable conflict. As mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, literature has the unique ability to mediate and thus bears the potential for change.

Related to Macé's previously mentioned point about how literature offers the readers "genuine forms of life, engaging behaviours, methods, constructive powers, and existential values" (2013, 214), Said also emphasizes how writing and reading bear an ethical aspect: "Acts of reading (are) grounded in the shapes of words as bearers of reality, a reality hidden, misleading, resistant, and difficult. The science of reading, in other words, is paramount for humanistic knowledge" (2004, 58). By illustrating how new generations inherit previous generations' haunting memories of the past, ingrained visions of the Self and the Other and a wounding nostalgia for better days, the novels apply literature, and more specifically fiction, to access voices that speak for cultural and political purposes. This demonstrates the democratic function of literature, as it "invites the reader to a dialectical relationship to words with an intensity allowable nowhere else" (Poirier in Said 2004, 60). Through reading the narratives of Amal, Jacob and Nidali, who all suffer from feelings of displacement, loss and fragmented identities rooted in the inconsistency of "home," the readers are thus given a unique opportunity to recognize various perspectives of living in the shadows of a contested homeland that creates an everlasting desire to belong.

Representing different modes of remembering, the concepts of nostalgia, postmemories, exile and intergenerational transmission of trauma seem to play a key role in creating images of the Self and Other that further contribute to construct identities, but they also illuminate various sides of the seemingly intractable conflict in the Middle East. Furthermore, the power of memories, and more importantly, the question of the *right* to memories, is not necessarily limited to this specific conflict, as its implications can be transferred to all aspects of life. Illustrated through the literary works of Abulhawa, Foer and Jarrar, such a movement from the specific to the general furthermore illustrates the previously addressed potential of literature when it comes to affecting one's own fundamental values in life, as literature, more than any other form of art or expression, "demonstrates what can be

made, what can be done with something shared by everyone, used by everyone in the daily conduct of life” (Poirier in Said 2004, 59). While various forms of memories inevitably constitute an integral part of people’s individual and collective identity, it is important to remember Rothberg’s claim concerning this, as mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis: “memories are not owned by groups, nor are groups owned by memories” (2009, 5). As attempts at reconciliation may be complicated by the inability to separate the past and the present, as well as distinguishing one’s own memories from others’, the preceding discussions and analyses demonstrate the dangers of letting memories become the grand narrative only.

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