

**TRAUMA AND DISLOCATION: A
CRITIQUE OF SELECTED FICTION BY
CONTEMPORARY ARAB DIASPORIC
AUTHORS**

BY

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**Trauma and Dislocation: A Critique of Selected Fiction by
Contemporary Arab Diasporic Authors**

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Trauma and Dislocation: A Critique of Selected Fiction by Contemporary Arab Diasporic Authors** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Trauma and Dislocation: A Critique of Selected Fiction by Contemporary Arab Diasporic Authors

This study analyzes the traumatic experiences of the characters in *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. The present study utilizes Michelle Balaev's claims regarding the pluralistic framework to analyze trauma which focuses on the contextual aspects involved in the experience that the characters endure in the chosen novels. The selected fiction is analyzed by focusing on the function of the protagonist and the primacy of place in relation to the trauma experienced by the characters. The concept of intergenerational or transgenerational trauma has also been examined in the selected works to highlight the diverseness of the pluralistic model of studying trauma. To support the conceptual framework this dissertation uses the method of textual analysis. The analysis of the selected fictional narratives highlights the manner in which trauma disrupts the lives of the characters due to the continuous presence of war and dislocation. Appropriating these concepts in the present study also highlights a reformulation in the personality of the characters populating the two selected texts.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my little brother, Muhammad Ali, whose spontaneity, affection and quick wittedness, never ceases to amaze me. Thank you my dearest kardeş!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Study

The study of trauma can be considered significant during contemporary times due to the occurrence of various incidents. Traumatic events such as the tragedy of 9/11, two wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan to the most recent occupation of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the Arab Springs which led to extensive losses one of them being the loss of Syria as well as another global phenomenon; the Covid-19 pandemic, evidences the perpetual existence of trauma in our lives. According to Shoshana Felman, "The twentieth century can be defined as a century of trauma" (171) and this legacy of violence has resulted in questions related to reality and existence for the victims who survive and must face the world. To answer their questions, trauma theory can be regarded as an essential medium. As Elissa Marder states that, even though the concept of trauma ranges fluidly according to the subject and the situation, generally trauma is regarded as a wound, "a very peculiar kind of wound", which lacks precise physical demonstrations and almost frequently produce consistent, incalculable and turbulent ramifications, and which invariably takes place after an extensive period of the initial experience. Trauma can essentially be viewed as having moral, political and historical ramifications due to the incidents often occurring in social conditions and as a consequence of social forces involved (Marder 1-2).

According to the 5th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5* (2013) by the American Psychiatric Association which defines trauma as an incident or experience that is overwhelming and distressing, generally involving a major risk to the physical, emotional, or psychological welfare of the individual victim(s) as well as his/her family and friends and including others. The initial phenomenon is usually abrupt and unexpected. It may be a one-time incident or in some instances, it may happen again on intermittent basis or it may recur consistently to the point of becoming chronic. Traumatic experiences may encompass: military combat, acts of terrorism, natural or human-caused disasters or accidents, violent death of loved ones, traumatic separations and other losses including neglect and

abandonment, slavery, and certain types of disability, illness etc. The definition of trauma has been extensively debated and has undergone multiple revisions due to the magnitude, diverse complexity, duration, intensity and constancy of potential stressors. For instance, Roger Lukhurst in *The Trauma Question* (2008), defines trauma as "a complex knot that binds together multiple strands of knowledge" (214). This can be deemed appropriate as trauma studies has significantly influenced and embroiled itself in varying fields including social sciences, historiography, legal studies, literature and not just the subject of psychology. The interdisciplinary nature of trauma studies is seen from the way it fields questions from subjects like philosophy, psychology, literature, and history, with an emphasis on fundamental questions relating to memory, narrative, and forgetting.

Additionally, in *Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, and Ethics* (2007), Susannah Radstone asserts that the term "trauma theory" first emerged in Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). She refers to the work of Caruth, Felman, and Laub as opening "the Humanities to trauma" (9-10). These theorists initiated various creative strategies to study the literary portrayal of trauma. Literature can be considered significant to the study of trauma as it is inclusive in nature and is based upon both the coherent as well as the ambiguous. Literature employs language as a medium to convey traumatic experiences. Through literary works, trauma theorists such as Lukhurst, Felman, LaCapra, Caruth, etc. center their notions on a concrete foundation.

For this particular study, the literary works taken under examination are contemporary novels by Arab diasporic writers, titled *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. As psychologists like Yuval Neria, who specialize in treating trauma related to war and PTSD have reported that people who inhabit countries of the Middle East are frequent victims of recurrent incidents adhering to war, displacement, intra/intergroup discord, natural calamities, etc. This points to a higher number of trauma cases in such countries though there is still a dearth of local critique on the subject. Significant events identified with national, individual, or collective trauma such as the Syrian civil war 2012, the war in Yemen, Palestinian Nakba, Iraq invasion, etc. are generally represented through scientific inquiry or media outlets. Even though oppression, dictatorial regime, war, strife, and displacement have always existed in abundance there is still a scarcity of locally informed critique regarding the traumatic phenomenon. To fight against

brutality and suffering, it is crucial to bring forward critique related to works of the Arabic countries and this particular research strives to make an effort towards this goal.

To serve the above-mentioned purpose, the novel *Salt Houses* (2017) analyzed in this study, is penned by the Palestinian-American writer Hala Alyan. Alyan's debut novel is based on an intriguing tale of one of the world's inherently complicated as well as relentless problem: the torment of Palestinians at the loss of most of their country to Israel and their attempt as refugees, to rebuild their lives elsewhere around the world. The novel pursues the life of a Palestinian family, the Yacoubs. The Yacoub family, initially lived in a villa in Jaffa until World War II compels them to leave for Nablus and live as refugees signaling the advent of perpetual trauma in their lives which seeps through four generations of the family. The second novel, titled *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), is also a debut novel of the Syrian-American author, Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. The novel follows the story of a girl named Nour, who during the fateful summer of 2011, faces not only the sad demise of her father to cancer but her mother, a cartographer by profession, takes Nour and her two elder sisters from Manhattan back to her homeland Syria to be closer to their roots. The prevalent civil war in Syria further shatters their family as they strive to maintain their sanity in the face of ensuing loss and trauma.

The characters of both selected texts feature refugees who as Coughlan and Manley proclaim, can be regarded as aliens who are forced to leave their country either because of persecution or a distinct fear of being persecuted. They generally escape from their country due to the onset of extreme violence and trauma often as a result of political reasons. Refugees are frequently forced to leave their homes in a hasty involuntary manner which consequentially leads to a resounding sense of emptiness and loss. They continuously face obstacles linked to issues of adaptability in the countries they flee to avoid oppression in their homeland. Thus, their displacement leads to an overwhelming sense of personal loss and trauma which serves as a hurdle in their resettlement in the host country. Refugees exist in a social group that is not considered positive rather, it is seen as a stigmatized identity which they want to discard as it is a traumatic reminder of the life that they have lost due to displacement and the new identity they have been forced to adopt, how they left their homes to seek refuge in unfamiliar territory. Forced dislocation shatters the connection to the cultural norms of their homeland and their identity goes through the process of reconstruction (22).

Moreover, both fictional works are traced through the conceptual lens of Michelle Balaev, to shed light on the traumatic experiences faced by the characters as they struggle to navigate through the trauma in their daily life. Balaev argues that to broaden the scope of trauma study, it is imperative to focus on approaches that move away from the traditional model of traumatic inquiry. She suggests the employment of a pluralistic method which not only considers various theories but also relies on the multiple contextual aspects surrounding the incident of trauma as well as the significance of place in literary depictions. Balaev expounds that by utilizing only the traditional psychological strategies of interpretation, scholars are bound to a specific variety of methods to describe fictional representations whereas "literary trauma theory must throw a wider net to catch the manifold representations of trauma in literature" (11). She purports that diverse notions and features from literature, as well as other fields of study, are necessary to explicate the phenomenon of trauma.

1.2 Thesis Statement

The present study carries out an analysis concerning the portrayal of trauma in the life of the families in *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Arab diasporic writers, Hala Alyan and Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. The analysis of the chosen literary works is enforced through the conceptual approach of Michelle Balaev who asserts that the present theoretical fluidity of trauma theory allows for a more nuanced understanding of the depiction of traumatic experiences, which is inclusive but also moves away from the rigidity of psychoanalytic critique.

1.3 Research Questions

- In what ways, do *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) adhere to the pluralistic model of trauma?
- What is the function of the protagonist in the selected fictional works?
- How can Michelle Balaev's notion regarding the primacy of place be traced through the fictional universe of the two selected works?
- How is the concept of intergenerational trauma depicted in the respective literary works?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The notion of trauma can be seen as steadily gaining more prominence in the field of literature during current times. In the recent era, people displaced from their homeland by wars and civil conflict constitute a major part of the foreign population around the world. The voices of such marginalized people need to be raised above the cacophony of issues that are generally prioritized. This critical investigation about trauma attempts to bring to the forefront a vivid picture of their unsettled lives both physically and psychologically. Consequently, the fictional works chosen for this research are relatively recent, so their study can be considered significant as there is a dearth of critique available on them. Whereas, the present study can be taken as an attempt to bridge this gap owing to its originality and also providing a more enhanced critical understanding of the subject as well as the selected fiction.

Moreover, the two novels, *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Jennifer Zainab Joukhadar merit critical investigation from the stance of trauma theory since both these novels are realistic depictions of the atrocities that have eclipsed the Arab world unceasingly. The Arab literary sphere and the Western world of publishing rarely intersect with each other. The literature about Arab society is predominantly unknown to the world. The representation of the Arab world relies heavily on varying news reports. Literature, on the other hand, can be regarded as a distinct and evocative source of representation to comprehend the reality of the life of these regions in contrast to non-fictional depictions, such as journalism.

The literary works under consideration portray aspects of life traversing the Arab world which are rarely illuminated through the available non-fictional sources. Both Alyan and Joukhadar succeed in acutely presenting all traumatic events that demonstrate the magnitude of the horror and hardships specifically related to the Arab world to grasp, the trauma they undergo in their routine existence. The study of the microcosm in the macrocosm of the trauma, which engulfs them even after its initial occurrence. This can also be observed from Alyan's and Joukhadar's domestic representation of trauma. The after-effects of war on the masculine psyche which previously ruled the literature of the past have receded to a secondary status in the novels and the primary focus is on the trauma endured by female characters. Male characters in the two novels are either dead or over-shadowed by their female

counterparts. Therefore, the current research can be considered significant on both literary and social grounds.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The present study examines two novels: *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. The study is delimited to only two literary texts as it allows for their extensive exploration.

1.6 Chapter Breakdown

The chapter breakdown plan for the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter includes an overview of the study, the thesis statement, research questions, delimitations associated with the study, the significance of the research, and the division of chapters.

Chapter 2: An Assessment of Literature

This section of the thesis encompasses the analytical corpus related to the historical tracing of trauma to its emergence in the field of literature as well as a critique of the primary sources employed in the current study.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework of the study

This portion encapsulates detailed scrutiny of the concepts adopted for the present research. These ideas are focused upon concerning the key writer related to those notions in the field of literary trauma.

Chapter 4: The Function of the Traumatized Protagonist in the Selected Fiction

The protagonists of the two selected texts are elucidated upon with critical focus in this specific chapter.

Chapter 5: Primacy Accorded to the Place of Traumatic Experience

This chapter explicates the dominant role place fulfills in the study of traumatic phenomena featuring in the lives of the characters from the two novels *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018).

Chapter 6: The Transference of Trauma across Generations

This last analytical portion expounds on a discussion on the transmission of trauma from the past to the subsequent generations.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final chapter of the research synthesizes the investigations conducted in the previous portions in an attempt to affirm the thesis statement as well as to respond to the questions posed in the initial section.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review discusses studies relevant to the present subject matter to contextualize the current research and to also explore the gaps existing in previous literature. Moreover, to reach a coherent and concise understanding regarding the field of trauma, each section of this chapter is engaged in a chronological study of trauma and approaches the subject from its origins to its contemporary outlook. The review of literature begins by providing a summary and then situates the present study within the context of the past research. Furthermore, it proceeds to elaborate on specific limitations of the previous studies and concludes by addressing the differences between the current and past work. In short, this section of the study ventures to explicate the previously dominant monolithic concept which emphasized trauma's unspeakability and inexpressibility, to comprehend the contemporary notion and potential of trauma inquiry.

2.1 Beginning of Trauma Theory

The subsequent review of past literature attempts to follow the history of trauma from its original clinical depiction, to an amalgamation with the literary discipline. The present section highlights a view of trauma theory's history, its evolution, and progress. This can be deemed as essential in order to delineate the beginnings of trauma theory to comprehend the framework of this study. The present research traces the political and social occurrences which led to trauma theory's progress as well as its historical development. Additionally, the study of trauma enables us to focus on literature in multiple ways. Trauma theory demonstrates the diversity of literature involving rhetorical strategies, cultural mores, and historical impact against the psychological input of the experience which involves the effect of the traumatic ordeal on the mental state of the victim. It also focuses on the physical changes that a sufferer is subjected to as a consequence. Primarily, it is essential to understand the term trauma. The origin of the word "trauma" comes from the Greek etymology "traumatizo" which means "wound". It is "a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope" (Garland 9). It gradually moved away from this definition of a physical injury to encompass the emotional scarring of an individual as well. Now there is awareness of the fact that

psychological evidence of a traumatic incident persists even when the victim recovers from his physical wounds a while back.

So, traumatic events tend to induce psychological symptoms as well as physical which posits that these psychological effects are mentally overwhelming and can promote the mental or in extreme cases the physical breakdown of the victim if not timely treated. Lenore Terr, a child psychiatrist confirms that “Psychic trauma occurs when a sudden unexpected overwhelming intense emotional blow or series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind” (7). Freud’s defines trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) as,

“...a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli...the essence of the shock as being the direct damage to the molecular structure or even to the histological structure of the elements of the nervous system... we seek to understand is the effects produced on the organ of the mind by the breach in the shield against stimuli and by the problems that follow in its train” (25).

This definition of trauma supports the above opinion. Initially, trauma was connected to major catastrophic incidents but now trauma's position has transformed. It can be observed as a complex paradigm of study which has invaded various disciplines such as literature, critical theory, history, and culture. Consequently, the growing progress in the field of trauma theory can be accorded to the response of people to discussions regarding ethics, memory, literary representation, and politics. The debates concerning such topics gained momentum during the 1990s, focusing predominantly on the severe forms of brutality and victimization which heightened in magnitude after the Second World War. On the other hand, the present research differs from the previous critique of trauma as it attempts to focus on literary works regarding the wars in Syria and Palestine, which portray the implications of traumatic experiences on the fictional characters depicted in the narratives belonging to these particular regions.

The evolution of trauma can be traced back to catastrophes that the world has been subjected to, through the course of history. One major example can be regarded of the two world wars which paved a path of destruction and traumatized masses. Moreover, the Holocaust, slavery, the Vietnam War can also be regarded as events of

cosmic proportions which shaped the development of trauma studies. From a historical standpoint, these incidents cannot be considered as the only crucial milestones which made the way for trauma theory. Rather, the official start of trauma studies can arguably be traced as far back as to the 1860s, when railway accidents began to be considered as viable agents of trauma. In these cases, clinicians became consciously aware of the pattern that began to persistently present itself. The victims would be healed of their physical wounds but instead, they would display signs of unusual symptoms which were psychological. According to one study, trauma related to railway accidents highlighted a condition referred to as "Railway spine" (Harrington 28). It manifested itself through numerous physical afflictions in otherwise uninjured and healthy railway accident victims. These accidents were considered significant as they not only traumatized one individual but the collective society, as they symbolized

“The traumas of rapid industrialization, of human independence, surrendered to the vast powers of the machine, of uncontrollable speed, of sudden, shattering, catastrophe, found expression through the neuroses of the railway age" (28).

Thus, the notion of railway spine originated with injuries to the spine of the victims but they also suffered the disintegration of their mental state.

Therefore, railway accidents can be referred to as the beginning of the discourse about trauma. To understand more regarding the origin of trauma, the mention of psychoanalysts such as Jean Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and Pierre Janet can be seen as a compulsory addition. Doctors during the 1880s observed the appearance of unusual behavior predominantly in women without any identifiable reason, which they regarded as hysteria, defined by Elaine Showalter, in *The Female Malady* (1985), as "faulty heredity exacerbated by the biological and social crisis of puberty" (130). Thus, hysteria was originally regarded as a characteristic associated with the fragile constitution of women. These psychoanalysts were originally responsible for studying the psychological condition of such women which further expanded the field of trauma studies. Before Freud began his studies on trauma, other physicians were also involved in research related to trauma and the mention of Freud's advancements in this field remains incomplete without first referring to his predecessors. One of whom is the French physician Jean-Martin Charcot, who foremost chanced upon the connection between trauma and mental diseases during his work with traumatized women. He was the first to conclude, that the symptoms that his patients complained of, which included

convulsions, unexpected paralysis, loss of sensory stimulus, and amnesia, could be featured as psychological in nature and not physiological. After Charcot, his student Pierre Janet furthered this particular avenue of research by examining how the attitude and psyche of the patients under investigation were affected by the trauma they suffered.

After Charcot and his student Pierre, Freud furthered the advancements in the field of trauma inquiry. Freud, in his study of hysteria, was directed by his predecessor Charcot and embraced some of his concepts with acute emphasis on past incidents. He pointed out in his book *Studies on Hysteria* (1995) that hysteria was responsible for activating the phenomenon of dissociation which can be understood as divorcing the consciousness of the victim into two halves. The patient suffers from frequent occurrences of hysterical attacks which are essentially a repetition of what he has already experienced. According to Freud, this illuminated the fact that the symptoms accompanying an attack of hysteria are in actuality a repetition of the physical condition that the victim has previously been subjected to. The patients found a sense of appeasement by giving voice to their emotional turmoil and by reconstructing the traumatic event from the past (30). Later, Freud revised his findings and repudiated them. He gradually shifted from his focus on what he had termed as “Seduction theory” in his paper, *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896). He reached the opinion that the traumatic past of the victim was not responsible for causing any hysterical symptoms which included the sensation of being choked, mutism, and inexplicable seizures. Even though, initially, the patient’s memories were considered evidence of sexual trauma in childhood. He even began to discourage the victims from describing their traumatic experiences as he believed that the women yearned for such sexual confrontations which they otherwise opposed. Freud started to focus more on advancing theories related to sexual evolution than towards developing trauma theory. Even though he may have recanted his stance but it cannot be denied that he was one of the prominent pioneers who laid down the basis for the future of trauma studies.

Freud’s contribution to the discipline of trauma research took newer dimensions due to the onset of the World Wars. The public eye began to shift from the subject of hysterical women due to World War I, leading to further progress in trauma studies. As Judith Herman posits in her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992) that soldiers who showed any sign of

weakness in their character either physically or mentally were shunned from society. Instead, they were blamed for their incompetence. In this manner, the start of World War I introduced the notion of psychological "first aid" (20). It was established for the soldiers who went through "shell shock" (20) syndrome to counter their symptoms of excessive screaming, weeping, and loss of memory, paralysis as well as a general absence of response that plagued them. Addressing the shellshock syndrome of the victimized soldiers close to the front through the timely intervention of psychological first aid, the soldiers were able to suppress their trauma and return promptly to action (20–21). Moreover, in 1980, PTSD was officially recognized as a traumatic phenomenon and this new illness was regarded as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD was elucidated as a particular response to a situation which exists outside the range of normal human experience, encapsulating crucial psycho-somatic and somatic disruptions (APA).

To a great extent, physicians during these wars treated these soldiers with contempt. They dismissed the notion of empathizing with their trauma. W. H. R. Rivers was one doctor whose example can be given as someone who aided his patients through their trauma and provided support to them by listening to their traumatic narratives. The esteemed war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, was his most prominent patient, who was persuaded to pen down his traumatic stories about the warfront (22). Sassoon claimed that this notion of writing about his experiences proved deeply fruitful as he was involved in writing his memoirs and other poignant poetry. The relationship between the expressions of trauma through the medium of language consequentially proved to have profound healing strength (7). Therefore, literature can be deemed as a vital source of studying the phenomenon of trauma. The experience of trauma in a literary work is an evocation to the pain of the victim that the narrative speaks of and the reader is forced to nurture an understanding of the victim. Literature is responsible for presenting a singular perspective of consciousness just as the field of psychology provides its own. The similarities between the fields of psychology and literature cannot be ignored. Both disciplines may differ due to their methodology but both are involved in the process of interpretation. Literary texts allow the researcher to arrive at an artistic understanding of consciousness. They offer analysis for the areas of experiences that might be ignored or denied by society and thus brings trauma to the forefront (Balaev xix).

Similarly, Joseph Heller is one such writer who through his novel *Catch-22* (1961), accurately displays the psychological repercussions of war on soldiers. The book details the events of World War II and narrates the story of Yossarian, who is a bombardier in the army. During one of his missions, he observes the traumatic death of one of his friends. Heller employs Yossarian's dilemma of recollecting and forgetting to weave an intricate whirlpool of conflicting emotions which illuminates the traumatic narrativization of the novel. Such a fractured narrative puts forward the opinion that memories during and after the war tend to recur, haunt, and torment. Yossarian may be physically unscarred by the conclusion of this novel, but he can never escape this war as his psychological trauma is permanent. Another point in the novel is that even though Yossarian is deeply averse to the idea of flying and could desert the army with apparent ease, he is compelled otherwise by his militant officials. This portrays the exploitation done at the hands of bureaucratic forces who disregard the trauma soldiers suffer and continue to increase the number of missions before dismissal from the army which never comes to pass.

Moreover, the horror accorded with the event of Holocaust during the World War II has left a profound mark on history. One such documentation related to it can be regarded as the memoir by Elie Wiesel titled *Night* (1958). Wiesel in his memoir details the inexplicable deprivation of human integrity as a result of brutality and war. He undergoes an inherent loss of self while in the concentration camp which can be accorded to the trauma he suffers from at the hands of the Nazi soldiers. These camps existed outside the norms of civilized conditions and thus, the degradation that Elie and the rest of the prisoners were subjected to, detached them from their prior selves. As Judith Herman asserts that "life was no longer governed by the same set of values that had existed up until the onset of trauma" (18). Additionally, out of the numerous atrocities highlighted in the memoir, one such barbarity inflicted upon Wiesel and the prisoners were the loss of individuality by stripping them of their names and obliterating their identity from society. Elie states that "I became A-7713. From then on, I had no other name" (42). The trauma of losing one's name was especially traumatic for the psyche of Elie and the other prisoners in addition to the bodily humiliations that they experienced. The predicament of all the people who endured trauma during the world wars has risen to a symbolic status in the literary works of the said era. The authors of literary works introduced psychological trauma in their works by presenting characters

as a symbol of the trauma caused by war. This proved to be significant as it aided the previously set scientific definition of trauma related to war to situate itself in the discourse of culture.

Moreover, the war in Vietnam can be regarded as another traumatic incident of grave proportions. Most of the symptoms displayed by the veterans of this war and soldiers pointed towards physical and mental incapacitation, which was the direct result of the trauma that they had suffered. The synthesis between the scientific study of trauma and a more literary approach can be observed from the fact that psychiatrists like Robert Jay Lifton worked with these war veterans. He recorded his observations in *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans—Neither Victims nor Executioners* (1973), based on previous readings of literature on the survivors of the Holocaust which they scrutinized with the clinical records of their Vietnam victims. Similarly, another psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, in his book *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2003), also contributes towards the treatment of these soldiers with the aid of literature. Shay's theoretical endowments were based upon comprehending the influence of trauma on the Vietnam veterans and soldiers in the long run with the aid of Greek mythology. For example, he employed the myth of Achilles to strengthen his analysis of the deep-seated psychological wounds endured by the soldiers and veterans (49).

Gradually, further development in the field of literary trauma studies can be associated with various reasons. One of the major grounds was the period of colonization that extended over most of the world. As part of a colossal project of expansion of Europe through a network of trade and commerce, parts of the world such as the entire continent of Africa, and parts of the Middle-East and Asia came under the domain of Europe imperialists. The subject matter of most post-colonial writers encompasses the atrocities incurred during colonialism. One such literary work that distinguishes itself regarding this subject, can be considered by J M Coetzee titled *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). The novel is centered on the character of The Magistrate, who presents a charming view of the colonizers. He lives in complete harmony in an anonymous town that comes under the power of the nameless Empire. Through the allegorical narration employed by Coetzee in the novel, the evils of colonialism are transparently made obvious. Colonizers dispensing imperial authority are gravely responsible for traumatically impacting the lives of the masses. The tribal

nomads degradingly regarded as the Barbarians, are not only inflicted with torture and inhumanity, rather, their whole existence is intruded upon by the colonizers. Aside from all the physical trauma that the barbarians had to suffer, their emotional torment is highlighted through Colonel Joll's savagery which lurks behind a mask of morality and purity. This mask is hypocritically deemed as a representation of civilized culture. Whereas, the natives are just considered barbaric animals.

The colonial rule may have seemingly reached a denouement but the underlying impact of such a massive period of exploitation and oppression cannot be disregarded. The consciousness of races other than white is heavily explored under the banner of racism which is also one of the fundamental reasons for the acute mental agony among colonial and post-colonial individuals. In short, historically as well as contemporarily, racism can also be regarded as a form of psychological trauma that influences its victims from within. Even though it may or may not be exposed in the external life of the victim. In this regard, Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), serves as a textual evidence that highlights the fact that racism is a psychologically intricate phenomenon that traumatizes people through its character depiction. The primary focus of the play centers on a multi-generational black family: the Younger's, and how racism is the main cause of discord among the relations of white and black people. It is a point of consternation among the members of the family as well. Mr. Linder can be regarded as the main antagonist of the play who symbolizes the racist attitude of the white people. It is a deep source of trauma for the Younger family, as Mr. Linder tries to bribe them to move out of the all-white neighborhood as their view of the Younger's is specifically based on the color of their skin. Such atrocities lead to severe internal conflicts for the family but ultimately the Younger's prevail in this battle as they demonstrate a profound show of resilience in the face of this racial discrimination which previously traumatized and detached them from each other and the society at large.

Furthermore, the 20th century introduced a new era of trauma instigated by the incident of 9/11. The world was traumatized by the terror caused by the attacks. The victims suffered from devastation, wretchedness, loss of mood, confusion, feeling of insecurity, haunting memories, hallucinations, and images, etc. This can be observed in *The Falling Man* (2007) by Don DeLillo. The text focuses on Keith and how he survives but still gets affected by 9/11. Keith's trauma is based on watching the death of his friend who is the falling man in the title. He may have been saved but in reality, Keith's

perception of himself and others around him is affected by the trauma of such an ordeal. Symbolically analyzing, DeLillo's *Falling Man* is not just one single man who fell to his death on that ghastly day. Rather, the falling man symbolizes what the victims of such a traumatic experience are undergoing, till this day: they are still free-falling in mid-air as a consequence of their complicated PTSD. Furthermore, another point of argument that needs to be focused upon is that the attacks of 9/11 can be comprehended at a cultural/collective as well as personal/psychic trauma. This scar not only impacted those who were the direct victims of this tragedy, rather, the whole nation's sense of solidarity was profoundly influenced by such an experience.

Aside from the representation of trauma ensuing from events of such magnitude as the World Wars, Holocaust, postcolonialism, black slavery, etc., the existence of trauma in the lives of civilians, specifically women cannot be disregarded. The women's movement during the 1970s can be regarded as an example of the transitioning of trauma from the private lives of women to the public sphere. The purpose of such awakenings was to impart psychological therapy to the victims and also to induce prominent alterations in the social mindset and policies. Furthermore, in 1971, the first crisis institute for rape was established and greater attention was also given to the trauma caused by domestic violence. In this regard, Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), can be deemed as an important work that charted the psychological inquiry regarding trauma theory. Herman predominantly dealt with the subject of complex PTSD, dealing particularly with people suffering from domestic and sexual trauma. The reference of this distinct work can be seen as vital for this study as even though Herman's work cannot be regarded as a literary work, it still yields profound magnitude over the studies conducted regarding trauma in the field of literature. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary nature of trauma research highlighted through the present study can be related to Herman's work. This is because literary research scholars have used this revolutionary psychological work to study the underlying pain and suffering of society.

To gain further comprehension regarding trauma, it should not just be reviewed based on incidents of colossal ramifications. Rather, trauma can involve experiences dealt with in daily life which can lead to emotional instability. Such sources of trauma can mostly be traced back to natural catastrophes, rape, poverty, religious discrimination, sexual assaults, rape and much more as discussed by Judith Herman in

her work mentioned above. The portrayal of these traumatic instances has been appropriately done by numerous writers in their literary texts. One such example can be regarded as the text of Buchi Emacheta, a Nigerian author. Her seminal work *Joys of Motherhood* (1979), deals with the story of the protagonist Nnu Ego, a Nigerian woman who has to fight against hostile circumstances to survive in a society ruled by patriarchs. Ego is unable to produce a child for her husband in her first marriage. This leads to her banishment to Lagos where she triumphantly becomes a mother. Her life again changes for the worst with the beginning of World War II, as she and her children are remorselessly renounced by her husband and his family.

Nnu Ego's life can be regarded as a blur of traumatic incidents that threaten to break her to the point of no return. Living in a patriarchal society, she is expected to marry and bear an abundance of children. Unfortunately, she not only suffers as the wife of the two men she is forced to wed but the collision of cultures that occurs in her life also leads to a sense of deep trauma for her. The underlying tension between, first the tribal environment and the culture of her birthplace versus the urban environment she is forced into, is in direct clash with each other. In her tribal Ibo society, she is gravely traumatized as she deviates from the norm of enjoying motherhood which is the "primary source of female self-esteem and public status" (70). On the other hand, in Lagos the urban city to which Ego is flung into, satisfies her wish of becoming a mother but the strained economic situation of her husband and the numerous wives that he has to support is a source of anguish for her. Despite working hard her entire life by contributing to the household expenses, sustaining her many children by working as a street-side peddler, and even fulfilling the role of a traditional wife, she is still traumatized by the callousness of her children who abandon her to a lonely life and death.

Another writer who focuses on the depiction of trauma in an ordinary setting can be regarded as the Lebanese author Hanan al-Shaykh. Her novel *The Story of Zahra* (1980), a bildungsroman work focuses on the life of Zahra from her childhood till her death. Throughout her life, Zahra endures a traumatized existence physically due to the copious amount of pimples that disfigure her features. They are a source of constant rebuke for her as she is dealt with by her strict disciplinarian father. Moreover, she is the sole witness of her mother's trysts resulting in her psychological conflict. She escapes to live with her uncle in Africa and is further traumatized due to her uncle's

incestuous affection for her. To flee her uncle's abhorrent behavior Zahra marries. This also proves to be futile for her as she is unable to adjust to that role. When the Lebanese civil war strikes, Zahra gains some measure of empowerment as she ventures to seduce a sniper, Sami to stop his assassination attempts. The final culmination of her traumatic life comes in the climax of the novel when she is betrayed by Sami, who shoots her down when she refuses to abort her pregnancy with him. As Zahra bewilderingly articulates "He kills me with the bullets that lay at his elbow...He kills me... crumpled from my presence... I can hear no sound from my voice" (183).

In a study on this novel by Francesca Quigley, various evidences illuminate the traumatic experience of Zahra. Quigley's study titled "*The Orange and Navel*": *Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma in Hanan al-Shaykh's The Story of Zahra* (2016), focuses on depicting the transgenerational trauma which passes from Zahra's mother to Zahra herself through the course of varying incidents in the novel. This study is significant for the course of the present research as it also discusses the transference of trauma from one generation to the next through the analysis of two works. Zahra suffers from trauma at various points in her life; when she is restrained to her bed and even hospitalized due to an unnamed psychological illness. Her mother plays a predominant role in the transference of her trauma to her daughter. To strengthen her argument, one of the incidents that Quigley refers to is the scene of Zahra's mother's abortion. According to her, this scene may be regarded as evidence of Zahra's unreliability as a narrator, but in contrast, it represents how uncannily Zahra remembers the scene of her mother's abortion and goes through the same intense feelings of relief and disgust that her mother felt from having to abort the child of their physical and mental tormentor. By only depending on the perspective of Zahra, the study tends towards being limited which is in contrast to the present critique, which utilizes the narrative of multiple characters to demonstrate the transmission of trauma. Quigley uses the powerful image of the orange and navel in her research, to symbolize the inseparable connection of mother and child through the umbilical cord. Trauma has a way of transferring from the mother to the child as demonstrated by Quigley, in the same way as nutrients to sustain the baby are transmitted into the womb (42).

2.2 Second Wave in Trauma Studies

Tracing the historical theorization of trauma studies from its scientific origins to the gradual inclusion of literary aspects can be regarded, an imperative part of the

present research in order to gain an understanding of the subject of trauma. Researches related to trauma theory aid in comprehending how the characters in the selected novels highlight the trauma experienced by them. The victims of traumatic events endure such pain which they are unable to understand and which paralyzes them to such an extent that they are unable to inculcate such experiences and proceed with their daily life. In this regard, Cathy Caruth is one of the most distinguished names in the field of trauma inquiry who prominently aided in bridging the gap between the science of trauma studies to the literary disciplines. In the 1990s, scholars and academics began to get intrigued by trauma theory and it steadily advanced in research. With the publication of two major studies related to trauma studies, Caruth is notable for being the foremost pioneer in the discipline of trauma theory. Her work *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), foregrounds a precise and coherent introduction to the subject of trauma theory. Caruth in her book proposes how traumatic loss is responsible for fracturing the experience of time for the victim who undergoes the ordeal. She posits that the post-traumatic stress disorder which the person in question is likely to go through cannot be completely determined or pinpointed to that specific traumatic incident. Rather, Caruth suggests that trauma results in the,

“...distortion of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it...the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (4).

Moreover, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) another study also by Caruth, details her propensity towards the field of literature and literary forms of analysis to examine the structure of belated traumatic experiences. Caruth argues that literature provides us with the agency to bear testimony to incidents that cannot be entirely understood and opens new avenues to comprehend experiences that might have remained unheard and unarticulated. In her book, Caruth makes a series of textual investigations of philosophical, literary, psychoanalytic, and film texts. Through the close readings of such texts, Caruth demonstrates that regardless of the elusive nature of traumatic experiences which suggests the incomprehensibility and

unknowability of such events, these incidents acquire meaning through strategies such as: by speaking of such events to other people and in return by being heard by them.

In the beginning of the book, Caruth asserts that trauma is not just a "simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is otherwise unavailable" (4). This claim by her is similar to the present research as a through the critique of the selected two works it is highlighted how the characters are not bound by the confines of the pathological constraints posed by traumatic experiences. Rather, the characters under consideration make use of their "voice"(4) to articulate the pain and suffering they endure, and even if they employ silence it is because of their agency and not due to pathological reasons. Additionally, other literary scholars aside from Caruth, who made trauma theory admissible to the discipline of humanities can be seen as Shoshana Felman and Dori Luab. Their study on trauma theory titled *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), centers on the concept of what they refer to as testimony. Felman as well as her co-author of the book Luab, advance the idea of testimony which can be acknowledged as the act of being a witness to any traumatic situation. The essays in this book investigate the traumatically historical incidents of World War II as well as the influence and aftermath of the Holocaust by focusing on how ordinary citizens along with artists use the medium of a language that involves stories, narratives, poetry, and novels to react to the above mentioned traumatic historical incidents (xix).

Moreover, they also investigate the responsibility subjected upon the witness of trauma. Felman and Luab purport that testimonial articulation varies from all the other modes and applications of language. They poignantly describe this burden as " the radically, unique, noninterchangeable and solitary burden" (3) which is the fate of the speaker or the witness. This particular notion regarding the burden of witness is similar to the argument in the current analysis about the role of the protagonist. The present study focuses on the purpose that a protagonist must fulfill as he/she represents the collective representation of trauma. However, Felman neglects to address the significance of the place where the victim undergoes traumatic experiences and emphasizes only the role of the witness. Through the present study, an attempt has been made to illuminate the primacy of the place of trauma and its effects on the victims.

Moreover, in her more recent work titled *The Juridical Unconsciousness: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (2002), Felman once more stresses the significance of language as a response to traumatic experiences similar to her previous work. She scrutinizes the difference between literature and literary means of expression from that of legal discourse. Felman asserts the idea that literature foregrounds the truth of traumatic events even if that truth is unspeakable. Whereas, in the legal universe this proves an obstacle as to achieve closure, the victim is sentenced to restate and act out the very painful occurrence that is being attempted to resolve (146). Felman maintains that when the language of the legal world requires the witness to provide their testimony, they are unable to verbally communicate in legal discourse. Felman specifies literature as inclusive to the literary use of language which aims to transmit the truth within the trial proceedings that the trial itself cannot speak. It strives to attentively listen and hear the inexpressible truth of a traumatic phenomenon that it repeats but cannot articulate.

According to Felman, this is due to the crucial role that literature plays in the era of historical traumas and trials. Literature, identical to law, is commissioned to following the concept of justice. In the following description, Felman aptly states that “Literature is a dimension of concrete embodiment and language of infinitude that...encapsulates not closure but...in a legal case refuses to be closed...this refusal of trauma... to be closed that literature does justice” (8). In short, Felman illuminates the concept of testimony and provides an unconventional literary study of the historical trials and texts under consideration. On the contrary, the present study of trauma relies only on works of literature for its analysis. Unlike Felman who in *The Juridical Unconsciousness: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (2002) does readings of trials and who in her book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991) make use of various mediums of discourse like poems, the current study integrates two purely literary and contemporary texts in an attempt to advance the investigation in the field of traumatic inquiry.

Caruth and Felman can be regarded as two of the most prominent theorists who contributed to the field of trauma studies. Their focus on trauma study in the subject of literature paved the way for future scholars as their work comprises of a commingled study of psychoanalysis, trauma as well as literature. The relationship which trauma has

with multiple disciplines such as psychology, literature, sociology, psychiatry, public health, etc. points to the "privileged and paradoxical relationship to interdisciplinary studies" (Marder 1). The paradox alludes to the fact that trauma inquiry eludes boundaries and escapes the limits of presently listed categories. Furthermore, Elissa Marder, in her article *Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions"* (2006), believes that trauma studies has gained influential and renowned insight through the field of literature. New insights have been developed in the field of trauma theory due to its influence on the literary field of inquiry (1). Similarly, the current research is also based on the critique of two literary novels which can be regarded as an attempt to further the field of literary trauma scholarship.

Fundamental aspects such as the existence of psychological trauma and the problem of its representation through the medium of language need to be considered in order to gain insight into the evolution of trauma studies in the contemporary era. Moreover, the part memory executes in molding the cultural identity together with the individual identity of the person involved, can be seen as holistically outlining this theory. The lens of other theories including postcolonial, poststructural, and sociocultural frameworks along with psychoanalytic theories, not only analyze the portrayals of violent experiences but also focus on the repercussions on memory and identity of the individual. The notion of trauma itself can be regarded as a turbulent experience that has a deep influence on not only the victim's emotional health but also his approach towards the external world in which he physically resides but cognitively rejects. Additionally, the subject of trauma revolves around areas of analysis that include the intricate psychological and social aspects that have a profound impact on the victim's understanding of a traumatic incident. Language plays a prominent role in shaping as well as being shaped by the traumatic event. In short, trauma theory focuses on studying literature and society as highlighted in narratives and media from a rhetorical, psychological, and cultural perspective. This involves having an insight into the multitudinous ways traumatic events can affect identity, remembrance along with the unconscious mind of the victim.

An overview of the development of trauma studies puts forward two models of research under which trauma theorists can be branched for convenience. The first model was regarded as the traditional model of trauma studies which primarily focused on the

teachings of Freud. The traditional or Freudian model of trauma stresses the extent of the violence on the psyche of the victim which impedes and disrupts the linguistic capabilities of the individual rendering them sufficiently useless to describe the incident. It also distorts their psyche and their perception of meaning deteriorates. Consequentially, the traditional model associates the following idea with horrific experiences that trauma renders the suffering of the victim unrepresentable. On the other hand, the pluralistic model of trauma research, which was later introduced, did not challenge the notion of unspeakability or the unrepresentable nature of trauma. Rather, it emphasized the suggestion that such an aspect can be regarded as one of the many responses to an extreme experience and not be considered as uniquely its defining aspect. This corresponds to the fact that literary fiction related to trauma relies on the tendency of a traumatic incident to distort the relationship existing between the individual self and others. It does so by challenging the underlying beliefs about society and morality which are themselves associated with particular environments. This obstruction within the self and others is profoundly examined by focusing on the physical domain where the trauma occurred to study it in accordance to external and internal spheres which leads to the understanding of the meaning and memory of the trauma (Balaev 1).

An influential study that focuses on moving beyond the traditional concept of speechlessness associated with trauma theory can be considered as Naomi Mandel's work titled *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (2006). She proposes that the trope of unspeakable in trauma literature is a "discursive production" (4-5). It eludes moral responsibility in the portrayal of suffering, by empowering the "problems inherent in speech" as opposed to reviewing the "ethical obligations involved in such representations" (4-5). She asserts her opinion in her critical analysis of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987), as she observes that "silence and forgetting are as much a strategic and self-conscious gesture on the part of the subjugated as they are the product of the subjugating culture's demands and requirements" (172). The idea which Mandel puts forward through her work is identical to the present critique as it is also an attempt to argue against the notion of speechlessness being an inherent feature associated with trauma experiences. The current research endeavors to examine the use of the strategy of silence as a technique of narration. However, this study differs from Mandel's as her analysis can be deemed

restrictive: she exclusively focuses on depicting when, why, and how the word unspeakable is employed. Whereas, the present critical approach can be regarded as pluralistic in nature as it is an attempt to address varying responses to traumatic experiences through the use of different strategies. Moreover, Mandel's paradigm of study only appeals to academics who venture to examine trauma related to anti-Semitism, racism, genocide, etc. which adheres to the frequent representation of the western canon in trauma studies. The present research, on the other hand, examines selected novels about countries that are not primarily considered for research inquiry.

Another study on trauma titled *Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres and the Lear Group of Father-Daughter Incest Narratives* (2010), traces trauma through the lens of the traditional model relying on theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth. Through her reading of Smiley's novel, the researcher asserts that the characters of *A Thousand Acres*, appropriate the identical narrative of the story about Lear as a re-enactment of a belated moment of father-daughter incest. This she analyzes through Caruth's theory regarding the belated manifestation of trauma in the form of invading images and compelling reenactments. Moreover, the author of the study also demonstrates the significance of scrutinizing trauma not just through allusions to time but also the exceeding importance of the space whether bodily or geographical in nature. For this purpose, the writer makes use of the theory of ecocriticism in addition to trauma. She explores "the articulation of psychic trauma concerning descriptions of the poisoned farming landscape" to study connections between the bodily trauma that the female characters endure due to the damage of the land and environment. Through such a relation between the contaminated landscapes featuring in the novel to the sexual abuse of the characters, the researcher discusses the extensive effects of the violation caused by trauma (184).

The supremacy that the place of trauma exerts on the characters is also interpreted in the present analysis. The place of traumatic experience which becomes the witness of torturous memories is outlined through the course of the present critical investigation. Conversely, this research aims to feature the trauma that women encounter in the private spheres of their lives which is similar but at the same time different from the current analysis which addresses the psychological trauma that women undergo in their personal life as a result of war. Even though the characters of

the selected novels are not actively involved in a conflict, the influence of trauma that disrupts their domestic sanctuary is a significant point of discussion in the present study.

Furthermore, Richard McNally in *Remembering Trauma* (2004) purports the idea that,

“If one has psychological problems (especially previous traumas) one is more likely to develop PTSD. Similarly, if one has good cognitive capabilities to reason things through, one is somewhat protected from developing PTSD...It is ironic that so much has been written about the biological mechanisms of traumatic psychological amnesia when the very existence of the phenomenon is in doubt” (18).

This statement highlights the need to revise and refine the status of literary trauma theory. Literary analysts such as Laurie Vickroy, Deborah Horvitz, and Anne Whitehead to name a few, can be seen as breaking away from the study of trauma theory considered through the lens of conventional medical discourse and exploring the diversity of trauma studies. Literary critics intensely scrutinize texts pertaining to trauma to fulfill various objectives. An example of this can be seen from the work titled *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002). In it, Vickroy asserts that "trauma narratives" are in actuality "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience" (1). According to Vickroy, trauma fiction can be seen as an individualistic form of retaliation by the people to the past century's cataclysmic incidents including the after-effects of war, industrialization, impoverishment, colonialism, rape, and abuse consequentially leading to the severe disruption to the psyche of the people (x). Vickroy propounds that "trauma fiction emerges out of postmodernist fiction and shares its tendency to bring conventional narrative techniques to their limit" (82). Horvitz on the other hand, claims that the writers she investigates employ the narrativized delineation of traumatic episodes to “expose the need for social transformation” (18).

In addition, Anne Whitehead stipulates that,

“Trauma studies work against medical reductionism by exhorting practitioners to attend to a voice which is not fully known or know-able and to bear witness.

The experts are not given the last word; rather, their role is to return to the patient his or her own story” (8).

In her book titled *Trauma Fiction* (2004), Whitehead concentrates on fiction about war trauma particularly Holocaust and post-Holocaust narratives. Numerous critics believe that trauma fiction can be associated with the present state of culture. They contend that the post-modern era can be observed as a compelling force behind varying trauma narratives. Consequently, these critics have characterized the recurrent aspects of trauma narratives. Trauma narratives are involved in expressing the trauma of their fictional characters to the readers whilst at the same time indicating the causes and outcomes of cultural abuse. In short, authors writing about trauma serve the purpose of transmitting psychological, social, cultural, and historical comprehension to the world (Vickroy x).

Another work, *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism* (2014), as the name suggests, investigates the future of trauma theory which is considered as an emerging critical discourse in current theoretical criticism. Through the use of innovative strategies, this collection examines and supports a diverse variety of notions and works which diverge from the usual sphere of traumatic scholarship. This corresponds to the present research as it also moves away from the established and conventional concepts of trauma theory. One of the essays of the present collection titled *Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age*, penned by Stef Craps investigates a text by a Sierra Leonean writer Aminatta Forna. The metacritical critique of Craps eschews the notion of Robert Eagleston (author of an essay in the same book), who believes that to bring evolution in the field of trauma theory, it should be considered by breaking away from the accepted Eurocentrism by “acknowledging the traumas of non-Western or minority populations for their own sake” and “on their own terms” as central (48).

This particular notion of Craps coincides with the current research as it also foregrounds traumatic occurrences of non-Western marginalized cultures. The present study involves the analysis of literary works belonging to Syrian and Palestinian culture which is still not under wider consideration. The present research is similar but also different from Craps work. This can be observed as the volume overlooks the subject of gender issues about traumatic inquiry as well as the fact that only less than a third of

the writers are women. Through this research, an attempt has been made to address this as the current study is inherently female-centric as it deals with female authors, extensively female characters and the issues they suffer due to trauma as well as the fact the present research is structured on the notions of a contemporary female writer.

Moreover, it can be observed that *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2014), altogether provides a comprehensive view of the theoretical discourse regarding the contemporary critique of trauma. In contrast, another point worthy of consideration which the volume does not facilitate is trauma theories about cultural and literary studies. The work titled *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012) by the American sociologists Jeffrey C. Alexander and Ron Eyerman can be referred here as they situate trauma theory outside its dominant poststructuralist-psychoanalytic paradigm of study. In this work, the writers present an alternative framework for trauma inquiry as they highlight the significance of viewing traumatic events as collective experiences which are not just merely psychological in nature. The authors examine the role which trauma plays in defining the emergence, as well as the aftermath of crucial social conflicts. The cultural trauma takes place when members of a particular society respond to a traumatic experience in a collective manner. An event that leaves "indelible marks upon their group consciousness" which inherently scars their identities forever (Jeffery, Enryman 6). The present study aims to situate the characters of the chosen works within the notions presented in this book as they support the current stance of discussing trauma from a broader cultural standpoint.

Additionally, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (2014) by Alan Gibbs offers a thorough investigation of the representation of trauma experiences in recent American fiction and non-fictional narratives. According to Gibbs's critique, trauma has achieved the status of a dominant paradigm of study for contemporary American literature. This work supports the present critique as it posits how frequently the traditional model of trauma theory was adopted which resulted in clichéd and formulaic readings of texts. Gibbs, likewise the current research, rejects the study of trauma from the perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis. Instead, he integrates theories drawn from the discipline of narratology to examine the narrative devices utilized by authors to portray the impact of trauma. One such narrative innovation that the book explores is that of metafiction which coincides with the reading of one of the works

engaged in the present research. As Gibbs points out, "always come to the crank-turners, the little gray people who take the machines others have built and just turn the crank, and little pellets of meta-fiction come out the other end" (135), which can be analyzed as a direct condemnation of the prevalent formulaic studies of trauma. Even though Gibbs's promising analysis of trauma through a contemporary paradigm can be considered significant, it is limited in its scope. It approaches only American literature whereas, by employing such narrative strategies on literature by Arab diasporic writers, the present study ventures to shift the worldview to consider such literary fiction as well.

2.3 Investigating Trauma Studies Progress in the Contemporary Era

Discussion regarding the progress of trauma studies during recent times can be considered pertinent to the current research as the present study focuses on utilizing the notions of Michelle Balaev from her works *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* (2008), *The Nature of Trauma in the American Novel* (2012), and *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014). She highlights that trauma in literary narratives should be considered through the medium of theoretical pluralism. This can be considered significant for the reading of the selected texts. The present study suggests that this particular concept regarding the comprehension of trauma offers an understanding which supports multiplicity and includes but also moves beyond the pathological study of the idea of trauma. To reinforce this purpose, the following analysis employs the intergenerational concept of considering trauma through the course of different generations. Moreover, Balaev also signifies that to examine trauma from a new perspective, it needs to be considered from a variety of contextual aspects such as culture, place, landscape, protagonist, etc. which is highlighted through this research. She claims that such pluralistic dimensions are vital for the comprehension of the traumatic phenomenon in literary works.

Balaev initiates her argument by critiquing the traditional stance of studying trauma in literature which makes "selective use of psychology theories that builds a solitary paradigm of pathology to explain trauma" (3). She claims that the traditional approach employed by Caruth and others, "claims trauma is a speechless void, unrepresentable, inherently pathologic, timeless, and repetitious" (3). Balaev moves away from this previous trend of trauma inquiry by indicating the limitations posed by

this paradigm. Instead, she proclaims that people undergo the experience of trauma in various ways. She argues that traumatic incidents are not exclusively unrepresentable. Not all victims suffer dissociation or heal through the process of recalling the painful event. She moves towards an understanding that facilitates the integration of cultural and social aspects for the recovery and comprehension of the victim. Therefore, the present study attempts to offer a fresh perspective employing the pluralistic model presented by Balaev regarding the study of trauma, on contemporary fiction by Arab diasporic writers.

The present study is an attempt to highlight the traumatic plight of Palestinian and Syrian refugees, through the specific fictional works. Speaking from a political standpoint, the Middle Eastern conflicts due to the Arab Springs, Iraq War, Lebanese war to name a few conflicts, have undergone a complete disfiguration. Traumatic experiences involving heinous acts of terrorism, conflicts related to civil war, strife, and repression have plagued the citizens and victimized them to the extent of having glaring psychological problems. In an article titled, *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture* (2010) by Madelaine Hron, examines the immigrant experience by analyzing immigrant scholarship from multiple places such as Eastern Europe, Muslim North Africa, and the Caribbean. It depicts the disparate forms of psychological and physical trauma through the means of a broad variety of

“In real life, newly arriving immigrants find themselves figuratively ‘translating’ into citizens of the host country: they must transform their images of home, their idealized notions of the new country, their former values, customs, and, above all, their culture, into the context of the target host country” (xvi).

However, Hron relies on the investigation of a certain marginalized group of immigrant fiction which distinctly features familiar exoticizing images of trauma such as diseased bodies, voodoo tropes, physical disabilities, zombification, etc. which conforms to the previous conventional attitude towards immigrants. In contrast, the present research inquiry analyzes novels in which the characters belong to a privileged station in life, primarily from the middle class and bordering towards the upper class. This is done in an attempt to do an innovative reading of the selected literature as even though the characters of the selected fiction may be protected by affluence, they still

suffer from an acute sense of psychological and physical trauma that scars their existence.

Although, the poignant manner in which Hron describes the translation of pain that the immigrants suffer, supports the present analysis even though the chosen novels mostly deal with the experiences of refugees. Through her study, Hron focuses on elucidating the agony accorded with the ordeal of dislocation and relocation, a "pedagogy of suffering" (237) as she states in her corpus. This particular notion supports the current stance of trauma inquiry as it is an attempt to express the pain which results from the place of trauma as well as the importance of the change in the culture, place, and time equated to that specific place. The heightened import related to the place of trauma which is alluded to in my critique can be vividly supported by Hron's words "In immigrant literary texts, these traumatic sequelae, represented by memory fragments, flashbacks, nightmares, or hallucinations, often eclipse the difficulties of integrating into the host country" (27). Furthermore, Hron also maintains that immigrants must also undergo translation themselves as they inherently adapt, change and recreate themselves (39-40) which is also similar to the present discussion of the reconfiguration of self that the people endure as a consequence of trauma.

Another work of substantial significance that supports the current study of trauma can be seen as *Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma, Authorship, and the Diaspora in Arab Women's Writings (Gender, Culture, and Politics in the Middle East)* (2015) by Hanadi Al-Samman. This book by Samman can be read as a counter-narrative as it shuns previous notions regarding the oppressive lifestyle of Arab women. It presents a nuanced view of Arab female authors who live in the diaspora and use their creativity to describe their experiences. Through Samman's acute observation of female writers, she undertakes the task to highlight how the authors remain connected to the prevalent situation of their homeland but at the same time assert the traumatic as well as the triumphant features of living as a diaspora. The trauma which they incur as a result of the rootlessness and unbelonging they suffer is discussed by Samman in her study. These assertions regarding the concepts of belonging and unbelonging resulting from the trauma of either departing willingly or being persecuted from your homeland are similarly addressed in the present critical research. Moreover, the authors of the texts employed also belong to the community of diaspora as one of them is a Palestinian-

American writer whereas the other is a Syrian-American writer, which in turn aids in presenting a nuanced study of the trauma they creatively depict through their respective fictional works.

Furthermore, Stephan Milich in an article, *Trauma in Contemporary Arab Literature: Translating Oblivion* (2016), engages in a study that questions the prevalent trend of relating the notion of trauma to a single historical or biographical incident, the repercussions of which are severely disruptive on an individual's psyche and as well as his relationship to society. The traumatic incident may pass but its effects distort the life of the victim or even any particular community. Milich shifts his stance from this practice of considering trauma and instead structures his argument around the fact that if the particular focus is afforded to the people undergoing a colonial experience or its aftermath then the resulting notion which emerges can be understood as the individuals struggling for survival as a norm and not as an abnormality. Milich's argument regarding trauma differs from my stance as my research inquiry is not centered on studying before or after the events of colonization but at the same time, it is similar to my critique as it focuses on a field of inquiry not broadly discussed previously. By investigating the thought process behind the establishment of oppressive dictatorships as in Syria, Egypt, and Algeria, etc. more profound readings of literature concerning the trauma of these particular countries can be done. The current research attempts to establish what Milich refers to traumatic violence and suppression becoming a norm of daily existence as the characters of the selected works endure trauma at a social and individual level which consequentially alters them.

Additionally, a research thesis by Alisa DeBorde *Seeing Trauma: The Known and the Hidden in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2018), presents a unique aspect of critical inquiry by engaging in the study of specifically the Victorian era. DeBorde aims to fill the gap created by the plethora of theorists working frequently on 20th-century literature about the events of the Holocaust and wars. However, she notes that life in the Victorian period was also deeply traumatic. In her research, she focuses on shedding light on numerous incidents of diverse proportions such as contagious diseases, industrial catastrophes, railway accidents as well as premature deaths which inherently wounded the psychological state of the people living through such traumatic experiences. To accomplish this goal, the author stimulates discussions regarding

trauma by juxtaposing recent theories related to trauma against the 19th-century formulations of this particular notion. She claims that the “depiction of psychical wounding countered mid-nineteenth-century notions of the unity of body and mind and prefigured late-nineteenth-century developments in the recognition of trauma” (45). DeBorde’s study focuses solely on illuminating the wounds of the psyche of the vast array of characters from the Victorian texts selected for the study. In contrast, the present research aims to situate the selected works in a wider cultural context by not only focusing on the trauma that the psyche undergoes but also the impact of cultural values on the characters and the alteration they undergo. Through her acute analysis focusing only on Victorian narratives by employing contemporary theories of trauma, DeBorde facilitates the opening of new avenues of study in trauma literature. This corresponds to the current the study which employs contemporary trauma conceptualizations to analyze recent fiction which has a limited number of critical inquiries.

2.4 Discussion of Works Relevant to the Present Selected Literary Fiction

The present research attempts to fill the gap in a particular area as it contributes to a deeper comprehension of the trauma associated with the culture, people, and society of Arab countries such as Palestine and Syria. The current study intends to analyze the suffering that the masses of these countries sustain as a consequence of war. Furthermore, this research aims to make a critical study of the two works by approaching them from a perspective that attempts to move beyond the established paradigm of considering trauma from a Eurocentric attitude. In recent years, critical ventures have come forward which an attempt to decolonize the study of trauma from its ubiquitous trend of Eurocentrism which often tends towards either homogenizing or even at times presenting exclusive studies of human pain, social and cultural reality. Moreover, trauma has been subjected to criticism for numerous decades from diverse positions and can be considered a recurrent topic in cultural and literary studies. From the barbarity inflicted on female patients of hysteria during the time of Freud and Charcot, to personal narratives comprising of abuse to the consequences of war crimes and genocide such as the Vietnam War or the Holocaust or 9/11 attacks, the subject of trauma remains profoundly relevant due to increasing global waves of war, insurgence,

social and political upheaval. The current investigation on the selected novels about Arabic regions aims to perform an analysis that moves towards a more multicultural engagement against hidden Eurocentric notions which tend to veer towards the pedantic. The inherent need to move towards a richer understanding of such regions can break the cycle of suppression and work towards diminishing the gap in this area of which this research is also an investigative effort.

In the context of the novels of the present study, the trauma that the characters suffer due to the loss of their homeland is highlighted. In a study titled, *Traumatic Movements: A study on Refugee Displacement and Trauma in Contemporary Literature* (2018) such themes have been emphasized. The research claims that,

“As the media constructs these images of refugees as invasive, it becomes even more relevant to turn to literature... provided a prism through which to understand society and in the case of refugees that is no different... The need for representing refugees in a personalized way... to steer away from the generalized narrative... as one singular invasive body on the Global North equilibrium” (3).

The writer of the above study traces the phenomenon of trauma through fiction other than Arabic novels including *Exit West*, *Little Bee*, etc. to provide a distended view of the situation of refugees all over the world. The researcher employs a pluralistic refugee model of study which is also the vehicle of the present study. Moreover, to further substantiate the perspective of refugees, a model of migration by Owen Manley and Reed Coughlan is also utilized by the researcher. The model as presented by these sociologists corresponds to the present analysis and serves to support the literary reading of the two novels selected. What makes the two studies particularly distinct from one another, is the varying use of texts as the researcher of the previous study gives a holistic outlook of refugees from all over the world and draws attention to the resiliency that refugees display. In contrast, the current research stresses the trauma borne by the Arabs of Palestine and Syria, when driven from their homes and the cultural loss such a displacement entails.

Moreover, as outlined above through the study of past literature, certain gaps can be accorded to the study of traumatic inquiry which has been attempted to fill with

the analysis of the present critical study. The major issue prevalent in the current trend is the dearth of critique available concerning the places related to the selected texts that are Syria and Palestine. Even though the dissemination of trauma can be deemed as a subject that is no longer restricted to a specific field. Rather, the study of trauma can now be considered a part of the habitual discourse. The discourse of trauma challenges existing assumptions and conceptions regarding the world, the expression of agony, cultural memory, and the individual self. With the aid of the present study, an attempt has been made to establish that such dynamics have additionally fortified in Middle East countries like Palestine and Syria. It has become a distinct need to discuss such issues due to the prevalent nexus between the escalations in the number of armed dissensions and the ensuing psycho-medical and humanitarian conciliations. Past traumatic incidents of historical import such as the Palestinian Nakba and Naksa, the Lebanese Civil War, the War on Terror, the Algerian resistance, state authoritarianism and dictatorship, the Gulf Wars, etc. have undergone exploration but there is a contemporary need to prioritize the scope of this critical research on trauma connected to the countries in the Middle East.

Similarly, very few studies have been conducted on the texts chosen for this research. One research on the *Salt Houses* (2017), by Helle Andresen (2018), is based on the subject of home and trauma experiences which she outlines through the examination of two novels about Palestine, *Mornings in Jenin* (2008) by Susan Abulhawa and *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan. Andresen's analysis of the two novels foregrounds the theme of striving to find a way of belonging away from your homeland whereas the topic of trauma exists in the background of the study and is not dealt with in a superficial manner highlighting a major point of difference from the current research which is a detailed study of trauma. The writer indicates the struggles faced by diaspora people by not only utilizing texts written by Palestinian refugees presently residing in America but by also structuring her argument on multiple generations of Palestinian families portrayed in the novels (47). Further distinctions which are perceivable between the present study and Andresen's is that she puts focus on the individual experience of the characters connected to home and how the memories of their trauma obstruct their ability to shed the stigmatization of unbelonging in exile. Moreover, Andresen analyzes this issue through the art of distinguished narrative construction by the writers of the texts under consideration (18). Whereas, the current

critique not only foregrounds the plight of the characters through the means of close narrative reading but also engages in the analysis of the personal and collective traumas that the characters endure by shedding light on the cultural values that shape their lives and not just the concept of home.

Furthermore, in an article *Calling the Phoenix: Integrating the Trauma of the Nakba into Palestinian Identity* (2018), the writer AbuKhoti argues that Nakba, as a cultural traumatic incident can be regarded as responsible for substituting the identity the people of Palestine previously possessed with one which is fundamentally based on what they have collectively lost. By focusing on psychological trauma, Abu Khoti concludes that trauma does not just pathologically mark the identities of victims. It in turn disrupts their mental state resulting in rupture and dysfunctionality. Moreover, the author maintains that the Nakba cannot be considered as a singular experience. Rather, its traumatic ramifications on the Palestinian population continue as an unremitting phenomenon which can be observed through the transgenerational features of the incident on the identity of the masses (50).

The above notion of AbuKhoti's research resonates with the present reading of *Salt Houses* (2017), as it not only aims to situate the study within the cultural context of the Palestinian identity of the characters but to also analyze the intergenerational trauma that reverberates through the entire length of the novel. The study attempts to discuss the intergenerational trauma that flows between the characters together with the notion of how the presence or even the absence of everyday culture markers affects the various generations portrayed in the novel. This contrasts with the current study as AbuKhoti's discussion specifically focuses on observing the traumatic experiences faced exclusively by the titular character of the novel *The Woman from Tantoura* (2014), whereas the current study encapsulates the torment of a vast assortment of characters, across multiple generations displaying a far-reaching perspective of *Salt Houses* and in turn of the Palestinian crisis.

Another research paper *The Palestinian Identity and its Symbolist Treatment in Ghassan Kanafani's "Men in the Sun"* (2018), also deals with the theme of Palestinian identity in the context of diaspora. The writer examines the use of potent symbolism in the novel *Men in the Sun*. He asserts, that the characters of the novel all symbolize the plight of the Palestinian people's identity as a whole but also their leaders and the Arab

rulers. Through the artistic use of symbols, the author focuses on not only representing the people and events in the novel in another light but also identifies the connection to the land, the place that embodies the Palestinian identity. This vital bond to the place of trauma correlates with the analysis of the current research. It ventures to closely critique the metaphorical as well as the literal influence of the place of trauma that is Palestine, has for the numerous characters in *Salt Houses* (2017), and the changes that occur as a consequence of this bond.

Moqbel, the author of the above research paper, in his reading of the novel focuses predominantly on the symbolic manifestations of the story and overlooks the discussion of the novel from any other perspective. His study of the characters lacks a certain depth as he only highlights the symbolic trend they stand for but pays less attention to the intensity of their psychological trauma (161). On the other hand, through the current analysis, an attempt has been made to examine both the psychological and physical pain that the characters suffer, the trauma that pervades their lives due to the loss of their homeland. In short, Moqbel's study can be deemed as more of a study of the symbols replete in the text whereas the present investigation moves towards a pluralistic trend as it seeks to highlight the trauma that characters undergo as well as other narrative innovations that have been employed by the authors of the present selected works.

Additionally, the second text of the present critical study can be classified as a part of the literature about Syria. There is again a general dearth of critical insight available regarding literary works about the Syrian culture, however, there are some books and book reviews available online that consider the issues related to trauma and help in understanding the magnitude of loss and suffering that the Syrian's endured as a consequence of the civil war. This aids in comprehending the situation of the characters in the present critical study. One such book which provides a graphic account of the Syrian situation is *The Crossing* (2015) by Samar Yazbek. Yazbek is a Syrian journalist and novelist who during the summer of 2012, was forced to escape the country of her birth due to an uprising that morphed into a gruesome war. In her autobiographical literary work, Yazbek details how she returns and crosses illegally into Syria and Turkey multiple times to chronicle the condition of her homeland while also depicting a series of first-hand experiences of people surviving under siege. One

such similarity which can be drawn between Yazbek's work and the selected text is that she hauntingly describes the way her back is mutilated due to the barbed wire during her many crossings which are jarringly similar to the protagonist of the chosen work whose back is also savagely lacerated while trying to escape border guards.

Similarly, a book titled *No Turning Back: Life, Loss, and Hope in Wartime Syria* (2018) authored by Rania Abouzeid give a non-fictional account of the Syrian conflict reported through the eyes of four victims including the harrowing account of a young man persecuted and disappeared for joining the opposition, a refugee child and her family, a jihadist and that of a man whose family was abducted by foreign jihadists. All share the same yearning desire to acquire freedom and safety in a fragmented country. Abouzeid's narrative traces her numerous visits to different parts of Syria as a journalist where she documents through a period of more than five years of covert reporting of the evolution of the dissension from its initial days as a protest movement through its militarization, weaving in fault lines of discord, sectarian disputes, extremism, and totalitarian savagery. According to Malu Halasa, who discerns in her review of the book that "the book's accounts of women and girls – 9-year-old Rula from Saraqab and later the kidnapping of Alawite women by rebels – seem peripheral to the real action of men and war", an inclination which differs from the current critical study as the analysis centers mostly on the trauma induced by conflict on the lives of female characters and its resounding consequences.

In addition to the insufficient number of critical studies regarding Syrian fiction, there is also a substantial lack of critical work on the second text of the current investigation due to its comparative newness. However, there are some reviews available online that aptly corroborate in pointing out the violent influence of trauma on the lives of the people fleeing from a war-torn Syria. Sally Partridge, in a review published in 2018, illuminates the significance of the work due to its ability to place the readers through its protagonist, at the very crux of the crisis which refugees face due to the inhumane violence engulfing Syria. In another review during 2018, Richard Marcus, appreciates *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), by foregrounding the author's ability to produce a work of fiction that tries to depict the traumatic upheaval that people are faced with after being mercilessly flung out of their homes.

In short, such reviews might not be able to provide an authentic critical reading of the novel but they do attempt to address the pervading presence of trauma and its implications associated with the analysis of the chosen text. Hala Alyan's words encapsulate the essence of the novel claiming that "In Joukhadar's intoxicating debut, the past and present are brought to life, illuminating how, in exile, neither can exist without the other. With clear, exquisite prose, Joukhadar unspools a brightly imagined tale of family and grief, mapmaking and migration. This important book is a love letter to the vanished—and to what remains" (Alyan). Moreover, one of the quintessential themes that are associated with the Arab world is that of patriarchy. Arab women are conventionally portrayed through the conventional lens of suppression and seemingly overpowered by their male counterparts. Such an orientalist stance fails to present a holistic picture. Through the agency of this study, the researcher has tried to counter this typical stereotype as both of the novels related to this study, feature characters who are predominantly female. The major scope of analysis is based on the traumatic experiences these females suffer in their particular culture and the way they are reconfigured by such atrocities.

Furthermore, the present study attempts to establish a nucleus of investigation; the people of Palestine and Syria. Most of the works written about such people tend to move towards being non-fictional documentations, especially of the Syrian country. Nonetheless, the texts employed in the current study are the works of fiction that aptly depict trauma and conflict from the eyes of ordinary people, their damaged psyche and homes, tormented generations of children, scenes of quotidian life which are structured based on presenting trauma in social and cultural reality allowing the genre of fiction to make it more accessible to readers. Moreover, the characters presented in these novels belong to the middle class of the society which counters the frequent previous representations of war-torn landscapes, abject poverty, and mindless corruption, an exotic and romantic portrayal. The analysis intends to fill the gap by depicting the trauma of a class of society that may not be poverty-stricken or live in camps but still endures vehement repercussions of trauma.

Consequently, the theoretical paradigm employed for this critical study is structured on the principles of pluralism as presented by Michelle Balaev. The pluralistic model of examining the phenomenon of trauma can be seen as expanding the

theoretical horizons as it stresses the analysis of trauma in literature through a pathological as well as the semiotic angle of inquiry. The destruction caused by trauma influences a variety of cultural and individual elements that continuously change. Trauma can at certain times render someone speechless. This experience can equitably at times reorient consciousness in an adaptive manner that shuns pathology. The present study attempts to argue that trauma in literature, needs to be read from the stance of a theoretical pluralism, which permits comprehension of this phenomenon through varying representations that include and also move beyond the notion of trauma being just pathological and unspeakable. By employing Balaev's notions of understanding trauma, the present research intends to analyze the varying features in the texts selected for this study, which are highlighted through the course of the literature review but are discussed in detail in the next chapter which is the conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the review of literature, historically, trauma can be traced back to incidents such as railway industry accidents, hysteria afflicting the patients of Freud, shell shock from the various wars, etc., which lead to the psychoanalytic notion of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) in the field of biomedical psychiatry. The study of trauma gained momentum, following the increase in the peace movements in the United States, feminist marches, through the harrowing narratives of the veterans who participated in the war in Vietnam, etc. Such events advanced interest in the study of trauma which remains prevalent to the present day and age. The incessant destruction caused through the amalgamation of suffering, war, technology, humanity, science, etc. have resulted in the transforming perceptions of people about the world as a whole. At the center of this, trauma's spread in the field of theory and intervention can be noted due to the integration of both the disciplines of science and humanities. This follows the view that trauma's dissemination is not confined to the discourse of humanities and sciences rather, it has also opened avenues to the daily discourse of people due to its dominating presence in all aspects of existence.

3.1 Trauma and its Emergence

Trauma is defined as the "radical and shocking interruption of the universe, but not its destruction" (Goldberg 137), which expounds that the anguish which an individual suffers is forced into the subconscious mind of the victim. The term can be stipulated as an individualistic internal turmoil, which tends to overwhelm the victim both psychologically as well as physically and remains elusive to the subject as well. As the literary theorist, Geoffrey Hartman establishes that the experience of trauma encompasses two features that are divergent from each other. One of them can be regarded as the incident of trauma, which is "registered rather than experienced" (537). It is not perceived by the victim rather it moves straight to the subconscious. Second, can be seen as a sort of remembrance of the experience which exists in the "form of a perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche" (Hartman

537). This indicates the disjointed and inherently belated fragmentary knowledge of the occasion induced on the victim undergoing trauma.

Moreover, while delineating a genealogy of the notion of trauma, one eminent academic on the subject of trauma, Roger Luckhurst in his book *The Trauma Question* (2008), indicates that trauma can be witnessed as emerging during the era of modernity. It draws similarities from the period as “intrinsic ambivalences: progress and ruin, liberation and constraint, individualization and massification...” (20). The development in technology and ensuing wars during the modern era generated a life of doubt and uncertainty which led to the progress in specific fields such as psychiatry, indicating the sense of dislocation and loss which consumed the psyche of the civilization. During the 1970s, the study of trauma-focused on the women's movement which is discussed by Judith Herman in her work *Trauma and Recovery* (1992). This initiated further discussions on trauma linked with domestic and sexual abuse of women, violence experienced by veterans of war and victims of terrorism, etc. In the 1960s and ahead, the Nazi proliferation and nuclear wars were the major proponents of trauma studies. Whereas, the theorization of trauma as a discipline can be traced to the 1980s with the shift from indeterminate terminology such as nervousness and shock to that of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). The crux of the theorization of trauma can be discerned as the monumental incident of inhumanity that is the Shoah. The heinousness associated with the Holocaust was a major event of critique in trauma theory detailed by trauma theorists such as Dominik LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, etc. leading to further advancements in the field of traumatic inquiry.

3.2 Relevance of Trauma to Literary Analysis

Geoffrey Hartman in *On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies* (1995), adequately questions “What is the relevance of trauma theory for reading, or practical criticism?”. He offers a response himself positing that even though trauma theory is still evolving “it stays longer in the negative and allows disturbances of language and mind the quality we give to literature” (58). Thus, literature can be deemed as an extension method to approach traumatic experiences as it engages in portraying the damaged psyche of people through the means of figurative language. As Herman phrases “the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud” (1). Even if the language employed in literature is not figurative, it still offers a medium through which to address such concerns. Likewise, Hartman powerfully expresses that

“In literature, as much as in life, the simplest event can resonate mysteriously, be invested with aura, and tend toward the symbolic” (547). The symbolic is not considered as a “denial of literal or referential but its uncanny intensification” rather it clarifies the connection of literature to cognitive functioning in salient spheres such as “reference, subjectivity and narration” (547).

Thus, trauma theory provides mediums through which to discuss the distortion and deterioration in mind, body, and language with the assistance of literature. It still allows a study of such events to provide victims with approaches such as witnessing and the ensuing discussion to deal with their trauma. It is questionable as to how writing about traumatic experiences in literature compensates for the horror endured and the closure that may follow. This is what trauma theory tends to investigate as it examines how the victims overcome their pain and allow language to posit or question even if is in a dissociative manner, the trials and tribulations they have incurred.

3.3 Conceptual Framework of the Present Study

The notions of Michelle Balaev have been opted for the analysis of the selected fictional narratives. Three of Balaev’s works *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* (2008), *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (2012) and *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014) the latter is edited by her, has been utilized in the present study. Balaev defines trauma as “a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society” (150). She extensively examines literary trauma theory from its foundations to its new possibilities and implementations. Balaev purports a more flexible and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of trauma in order to shift away from the “discursive dependence” (xi) on a singular psychologically oriented approach of viewing the concept of trauma.

Balaev initiates her argument by referring to the ideas of unspeakability and unrepresentability, long associated with the study of trauma. Previous theorists of trauma advocated the notion that trauma is an experience which is undefinable in nature and considered it as something that escapes representation. Traumatic incidents induce such horror in their victim that it becomes difficult for them to grasp the gravity of the situation and hence, are unable to describe it or even speak of it incoherent terms. It renders them speechless, highlighting linguistic indeterminacy, ambivalence, and

aporia. The psychologist Richard McNally, outlines a definition of trauma founded on three variables “an objectively defined event, the person’s subjective interpretation of its meaning, and the person’s emotional reaction to it. The definitional process is fraught with complexities” (78). Whereas, Balaev examines trauma theory to investigate new strategies for its progressive discussion.

3.3.1 Michelle Balaev and the Pluralistic Model of Trauma

In the work titled *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), Balaev introduces and examines the classic or traditional model of trauma and the pluralistic model of studying trauma. She maintains the argument that trauma in literary narratives should be analyzed from the stance of theoretical pluralism, which not only assists the comprehension of trauma portrayed in literary texts but also moves past the idea of trauma as unspeakable and pathological in nature. Balaev also examines the contribution of Cathy Caruth and Kali Tal in the study of trauma to further her stance regarding the pluralistic model. Both Caruth and Tal can be regarded as responsible for popularizing the notion of trauma as an unrepresentable experience. The theoretical notions initiated by these scholars proposed that the phenomenon of trauma posits an inexplicable problem dealing with the unconscious mind of the subject that underscores the intrinsic conflict between language and experience. This contradiction results in severing the knowledge the subject has of that traumatic experience leading to a lack of linguistic capabilities. Caruth particularly stresses the indeterminacy of language associated with the incident of trauma and this notion of unspeakability became a predominant concept related to the study of trauma in the traditional model. The development in the study of trauma theory in literary scholarship can be traced back to the innovations in the psychological underpinnings of trauma in addition to the rhetorical, societal, and semiotic concerns that have gradually become a part of the inspection of trauma in the field of literature.

Whereas Balaev posits that in the pluralistic model the concept of trauma is analyzed from numerous lenses and is not confined to the subject of unrepresentable. In this paradigm, the response to a traumatic experience is not automatically labeled pathological since the process of remembering is not under the control of the traumatic event itself but available to be influenced by contextual factors, such as the individual’s needs, character traits, social context and cultural dimensions of telling (35). She also highlights that appeal of the classic paradigm of studying trauma prevails by

commingling neurobiological theories which deal with the details of mind and memory and studying it together with semiotic theories which consider the operations of language, symbols, and associations. Moreover, the pluralistic model of studying trauma opposes the classic model's tendency to regard trauma universally by emphasizing its general features and effects. Balaev points out the need to situate the study of trauma in a wider spectrum of conceptual structure that is inclusive of not only neurobiological theories but also social psychological theories as well. Balaev states that,

“...critics like Rothberg and Forter work within a neo-Freudian and postcolonial framework. Critics such as Luckhurst, Mandel, Yaeger, and Visser address the social and political implications of trauma within a variety of frameworks... Irene Visser employs a social psychology model of trauma within a postcolonial analysis... Laurie Vickroy and Paul Arthur situate rhetorical concerns of trauma within a cultural studies framework” (3).

She proposes this to restructure the cognizance of trauma by recognizing the contextual elements such as the semiotic, rhetorical, and social connotations involved in identifying the value of the experience.

Moreover, Balaev demonstrates through her conceptualizations that such an evolutionary practice of considering the cultural and social contexts while studying traumatic experiences in fiction can be encompassed under the pluralistic model of trauma due to the variety of approaches utilized to analyze traumatic experiences. By employing a pluralistic paradigm of reading, the focal point of trauma, as an unrepresentable circumstance can be shifted to a more flexible understanding. Balaev elucidates that,

“In a pluralistic model, the concept of trauma is theorized from multiple sources and not restricted to the discourse of the unrepresentable...Importantly, a pluralistic model describes the multifaceted functions and effects of a traumatic experience in terms that extend past essentialist notions of identity, experience, and remembering found within the traditional model because it conceptualizes memory differently” (xiii).

Such an understanding accentuates the explicitness of the trauma experience which identifies meaning through a serious contemplation of the cultural and social constructs

involved in that painful experience. Aside from highlighting the utilization of a diverse set of approaches involved in the study of trauma in literary narratives, Balaev also suggests that "extreme experiences cultivate multiple responses and values" (13).

Additionally, the pluralistic model is significant for the present study as Balaev asserts that in order to gather a profound comprehension of trauma it is important to move beyond previous ideas of critique which consequentially leads to an extensive range of questions concerning the representation and event. Appraising the plethora of meanings associated with trauma regarding the private and public spheres of the subject, aids in presenting the society and the individual in sharp focus "rather than consolidating the experience of trauma into a singular, silent ghost" (4-5). Thus, Balaev highlights the significance of moving away from previous approaches of theorizations, to newer grounds of literary trauma studies such as the pluralistic model of analyzing trauma. This paradigm posits that criticism can examine trauma as something which draws attention to the exploration of the connection existing between the psyche, behavior, and language of the subject. This goal can be achieved without relying on the classic inferences related to the traumatic inquiry which tend to focus on the universal pathology and unrepresentability of the experience.

Furthermore, Balaev indicates that if the influence of the broader contextual factors such as economic, social, cultural, and political details is taken into account from the beginning then these aspects can be considered as the "background contexts or threads in the fabric of traumatic experience" which confirm that "trauma's meaning is locatable rather than permanently lost" as opposed to the inherent inexpressibility touted by the former classic model of interpretation (8). Balaev's theorizations maintain that a sole conceptualization of literary trauma criticism is unlikely to consider the numerous and conflicting portrayals of trauma incidents in literature, as literary works can structure their narratives around a vast diversity of values that disclose cultural and independent comprehension regarding society, memory, and self. Balaev also traces a variety of acute emotional conditions through an array of "narrative innovations" (159), which is inclusive of imagery related to the landscape, trauma, temporal fissures, silence, etc. The utilization of "a non-linear plot or disruptive temporal sequences to emphasize mental confusion, chaos or contemplation as a response to the experience" (159) is, as Balaev points out utilized by authors to convey the experience of trauma. Such narrative strategies have also been considered in the novels of this critical

research. Balaev facilitates the concept of silence as a narrative strategy that moves away from the prevailing idea of considering it only as a pathological notion of unspeakability. As Balaev advances, that silence works under a variety of cultural restraints as it depends on the societal culture that what can be spoken about and what should remain under wraps. Balaev highlights the use of these silences as “rhetorical strategies” that may form a “gap in time or feeling”, which permits the examiner to reflect on what could or might have passed during that gap of silence (159). This, as a result, magnifies the impact and meaning of the incident (159). She concludes that such narrative techniques aid the writer in structuring the text into a shape that encapsulates the troubled psyche of the characters associated with dissociation and the memory of trauma which should be considered for a pluralistic reading of narratives.

Balaev also claims that memory, following the pluralistic model, can be examined as a "fluid and selective process of interpretation" (xiv), in contrast, to a truthfully literal remembrance. The process of remembering is impacted by numerous external elements such as place, geographic setting, period, culture, etc. as well as internal aspects including the personality, individual traits, family past, and others. Furthermore, such characteristics related to context, specifically landscape, societal values, and culture integrate and affect the concept of remembering. Balaev's contention regarding memory points to multiple ramifications not only related to the process of recall, rather, how a traumatic experience is analyzed and given value (xiv). She further stipulates the influence of trauma on memory by drawing demarcations between the previous trend of considering traumatic experiences as existing on a separate plane, preserved away from the normal memories of the individual, against the complex concept of regarding memory as a dynamic and transformative process expressed by authors. The revisionary process of remembering includes new characteristics of the past with each new narration, or even created from numerous angles, which evidences that memories of the event are altered according to the mental state of the individual at that specific temporal period. Therefore, traumatic memory is seldom outlined as a precise recollection of the past.

She signifies that particular works highlight, through the use of varying narrative techniques, the use of varying narrative techniques, that a traumatic incident can draw out distortions in an individual's perception or even alters consciousness that specifies the "dynamics of memory and identity" (45). One strategy that she indicates

and which is utilized to project traumatic disruptiveness is “narrative dissociation” (45). She conceptualizes this dissociation in the text as a type of literary portrayal of a distorted form of consciousness, that disorders and then reorients a character’s cognizance. In correspondence to this notion, Balaev outlines definitions of psychological dissociation by the psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer. According to Kirmayer, psychological dissociation points to “shifts in mental states or voices” and can be comprehended as a time in which the characters experience a dual state of perception or consciousness (45).

Kirmayer expresses that traumatic experiences are generally associated with multiple responses ranging from repressiveness to amnesiac tendencies etc. but trauma cannot be limited to just these certain responses. It relies on the type of experience that the victim undergoes. He further states that dissociation is frequently denoted as a monolithic separation from the incident of trauma, rather, it is inherently more fluid in nature as it can be discovered in "in all degrees of intensity in the same individual and is characterized by its fluidity" (qt. in Michelle 180). Methods to depict dissociation incorporate the "disjunction of time through the use of repetition and negation; imagistic scenes of violence that lack emotional description; syntactical subversion and rearrangement; temporality; and a doubled consciousness or point of view" (qt. in Michelle 180). These narrative strategies describe numerous situations of tension and distress that emerge for the characters and foreground the cultural and private aspects of an individual's life that inform the episode. Moreover, a disordered narrative evidences the struggle that victims suffer from to highlight the aim and meaning of a painful occurrence. A disjointed sense of self and reality is at times highlighted through the absence of cohesion in the guise of an "interruptive or nonlinear narrative" (xvi).

The previous dominant psychological trend in literary trauma theory propagated that the predominant response to traumatic experiences is the fragmentation of a victim’s consciousness. However, Balaev identifies through her conceptualizations that the diverse imagery describing trauma that is portrayed in literature necessitates the use of a theoretical model of pluralism. A model that engages in an interpretation drawing on diverse theories related to trauma and memory that focus on the multiple representations presented in texts. Thus, Balaev, through her critical examination embarks on a journey where she attempts to establish a methodology that engages in a theoretical variety and moves onward from the prevalent classic model to inculcate

alternative theoretical practices to address the varying responses, imagery, etc. associated with trauma in literary works.

3.3.2 The Primacy of Place

Balaev in her work titled *The Nature of Trauma in the American Novels* (2012), undertakes an exploration that rethinks the crux of a traumatic incident, its very value, and meaning by presenting the variety of its forms. She makes use of contemporary American novels in an endeavor to expand the discussion connected to the subject of trauma which surpasses that of the disease-directed pathological paradigm existing in the field of literary analysis. Her scrutiny of the traditional paradigm of trauma as an essentially unincorporated incident that shatters the psyche of the subject pathologically aids the present analysis of selected literary works as it focuses on employing a new model of the analytic approach. This new approach perceives trauma within a framework of study that accentuates the myriad of responses to a disturbing event and the significance of the contextual elements involved in highlighting the importance connected to that traumatic experience.

Balaev's analysis of the works she has foregrounded in her texts yields the conceptualizations which have been employed in the present reading of the selected texts. While considering the pain and suffering that authors depict in literary works, they use the place of trauma as a site that portrays and formulates the protagonist's experience and view of the world. For the current critique, the role of place as depicted by Balaev has been highlighted in the context of trauma. The present study is an attempt to not only study its repercussions on the protagonist of the two texts but also on the other characters illustrated in the selected novels. Furthermore, the use of imagery related to the landscape of trauma also plays an important role in conveying the influence of trauma. Such textual evidence related to the importance of place indicates the magnitude of the contextual features in establishing the value accorded to a traumatic incident.

Balaev's conceptualizations regarding the change in the self of an individual maintain that the occurrence of trauma can result in shaping the consciousness and altering the victim's perception in a manner that reformulates their identity in a non-pathological method. This change in the perception of an individual is discussed by Balaev through landscape imagery. Employing a pluralistic approach to trauma critique

aids in analyzing the contextual elements such as society and place and their involvement in the experience, memory, and recall of a traumatic event in a text. Balaev clarifies that in fiction, trauma is depicted through context to delineate the inherent psychological suffering by situating traumatic experiences in a specific place and landscape. As Balaev insinuates, place can be regarded as "the silent second character" as it is the locality, the culture, and the history of that place and people that combine to identify the value held by trauma (40).

In *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), Balaev further highlights the role of place, which she states "functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means". She moves away from homogenous practices of viewing traumatic experiences from only the perspective of psychological theories. By describing the geographical place of the painful endurance and its remembrance are responsible for situating the subject within a wider cultural background that comprises of social values which also impacts the recollection of the incident and the "reconfiguration of the self". The diversity of absolute meanings that are created within the narrative and the several new meanings that emerge due to the result of the traumatic incident causes a revision of the previous understanding of the world and self. This presents the notion that each writer depicts a different point of view on the meanings of traumatic events that stress the alteration of identity and not the dismantling of the individual's self. Thus, Balaev's notion of "primacy of place", insinuates that trauma fortifies the victims' experience in a cultural context that outlines the meaning of the traumatic event and its memory is relied upon for the analysis of the current study (149-151).

Additionally, the primacy of the place of trauma fortifies the traumatic episode for the individual within a wider context of culture as the place acquires meaning fundamentally from two elements; the individual's conception and secondly the symbolic import which is granted by culture. As Balaev highlights, each writer locates the circumstances of trauma in varying manners in certain cultural constructs that mold the memory and the meaning accorded to that trauma (159). The concrete place of trauma and the memory of loss affiliated to the place of trauma becomes a distinguishable starting point for the writer to unravel the manifold meanings related to that episode. The physical landscape symbolizes the victim's sense of self and authors frequently focus upon the natural surroundings when the protagonist undergoes a

traumatic remembrance. This is done to highlight the inner conflict of the psyche and the diverse ways in which “the individual attempts to understand, incorporate and explain the traumatic event” (161). In short, Balaev’s perspective overlaps the study of trauma with the theory of ecology which allows her to elicit a new assumption related to trauma that emphasizes the aspect of the place is traumatic circumstances in contrast to temporal. Balaev's fresh conceptualization of the pluralistic paradigm of inquiry considers various points of inquiry and stresses the heterogeneous reactions to trauma. Freud's influence over the course of the development of trauma theory is undeniable but recently academic scholars have started to counter the arguments presented by Freud and moved towards new beginnings. Balaev’s work *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (2012), can be observed as one such effort in this regard.

Therefore, Balaev contends that from a fundamental view, it is literature itself that drives the notion to look beyond the governing traditional model of trauma theory through the analysis of the multiflorous imagery of trauma in literary texts. This necessitates a pluralistic attitude that makes use of a variety of approaches related to the experience of trauma and memory, "to account for its diverse representation" (xiii). In addition to this, the pluralistic outlook of studying trauma in the present research can also be considered beneficial due to its treatment of the process of memory. Balaev's assertion regarding trauma theory can be seen as recuperative as she moves away from the previous trend of signifying trauma through mediums of fracture, loss, and pathology. She points out that "the land is an entity that contains and transmits knowledge of (the character's) sense of self" (46). She demonstrates that "Direct contact with the land is part of the protagonist's process of remembering and healing due to the cultural histories that are connected to the southwestern landscape" (65–66) and in the case of the present study; the landscape of the middle east.

3.3.3 The Function of the Protagonist

The role of the protagonist in the critique of traumatic circumstances is another point by Balaev which has been utilized in the present research. Balaev maintains the profound magnitude of the protagonist while discussing trauma in fiction. She points out that the protagonist serves as a "representative cultural figure" (154). The protagonist, functions as a figure who has the responsibility of depicting not only his own singular experience of trauma, rather, the burden of representing the pain and suffering experienced by a large number of people. Balaev highlights that the

protagonist through this particular duty conveys the certainty of a subjective traumatic experience that is related to "larger social factors and cultural values or ideologies" (155).

Additionally, she believes that the goal of the protagonist lies in his rendition of a group of people or a specific race, culture, or gender who collectively suffered a massive agonizing experience whose tribulations are illuminated through the distinguished literary figure of the protagonist. Furthermore, the protagonist in this regard intensifies any traumatic event where millions have endured extreme brutality and violence. Balaev also confirms the fact that if trauma is described in connection to the unity of political and personal identities, then the individual incidents faced by the protagonist are frequently in consequence of superior cultural forces. In short, the protagonist propagates the idea of the immanent power of a complicated human cognition that withstands experiences of torment and moves to an identity typically designated by a previous incident of trauma (158).

3.3.4 Intergenerational or Transgenerational transmission of Trauma

The concept of intergenerational trauma is employed in the current literary research to establish Balaev's stance regarding the pluralistic model of critique which emphasizes the consolidation of neurobiological theories and other social theories. This notion is employed in the present analysis to further perpetuate and centralize Balaev's principle point of view regarding the use of a pluralistic paradigm of analysis to facilitate the study of trauma in literature. Balaev proposes this aim to reach a more nuanced understanding of the experience of trauma which is aided by observing the contextual factors regarding the culture and place involved in the incident. Balaev states that traumatic experiences are "repetitious, timeless and unspeakable, yet, it is also a literal, contagious and mummified event" (151). The phenomenon of trauma repeats itself, constantly and incessantly, through the unconscious actions of the survivor and in complete opposition to his will (2). She further points out that a traumatic incident can be regarded as infectious in nature as it is transferable to the next person based on mutual ethnic origins or ancestry or even through the guise of narration. Moreover, trauma, she posits is never just associated with one single person. Rather, people are embroiled in each other's trauma. This can be seen from the critical reading of the two texts especially the novel *Salt Houses* (2017) which features four generations of a

Palestinian family as they live through the trauma which contagiously passes from one generation to the next.

The legacy passed on by parents to their children is not wholly constituted on biological factors, rather, it focuses on the mental aspects of an individual as well. According to Kathleen Nader, all the cells of the human body are saturated with a certain consciousness that is burdened with the thoughts and sentiments moving across different generations (571). It was during 1966, that clinicians initially started observing the copious number of children of the people who had survived the Holocaust pursuing treatment (Danieli). Additionally, the term “survivor syndrome” (DSM-III, 1980), appeared in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which was responsible for recognizing the possible transmission of trauma to the future generations of victims. Moreover, while considering the transmission of pain across generations, trauma can be defined as a wound that never wholly mitigates over time. Trauma moves across generations and the present is experienced by the victims as if it were the past. The subsequent generations are divested of their particular position in society. They are deprived of the capacity to define themselves separately from their preceding generations (Orange 173-180).

Similarly, the succeeding generations of Nazi Holocaust survivors exhibited psychological abnormalities that were previously unresolved by psychotherapy. The symptoms that were inherently observed in the victims were encapsulated under the "concentration camp syndrome" (Yehuda et al. 630). They included severe incidents of anxiety, depression, and destructive behavioral patterns incorporating weak methods of coping, unrestrained dependence on others, identity issues, attachment and isolation problems, lack of personality development, etc. Furthermore, the subsequent generations were documented as being more hazardous to physical problems and increased exposure to anxiety. In short, it seemed as if the ensuing generations had undergone the traumatic experience of the Holocaust from the abundance and incessant array of symptoms that they demonstrated (Yehuda et al. 640-655).

Considering the specific terminology of transgenerational trauma, it is generally employed to refer to the inclination that parents possess to revive former parenting methods to raise their children which they previously underwent during their childhood. Such parenting patterns can border on both positivity or negativity and frequently relies on the relationship between the giver and the receiver. In addition to this, an extrinsic

trauma incident can also become a medium for the transmission of trauma, initially during infancy or even at some later stage in the life of the individual (Felsen 45-67). Moreover, the transgenerational trauma can be passed in a direct manner which can encompass pathological cognitive syndromes such as anxiety, schizophrenia, depression, paranoia, etc. Such syndromes could become apparent in the parents following their trauma which consequentially the children could also identify with as well. Secondly, in indirect transference, the experience of survivors leads to profound issues related to their ability to function as parents. This results in a general feeling of neglect on the upbringing of the children (Baranowsky et al. 249).

3.4 Methodology of the Present Research

As stated above in the conceptual framework, the current study focuses on the analysis of trauma which is an inherent and perpetual part of the world depicted in the selected texts: *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar. Therefore, a qualitative approach is employed for the analysis of the chosen works. In their handbook of qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln, they purport this methodology as encompassing

“...an interpretative naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (3).

Moreover, the analytical and descriptive nature of the qualitative approach utilized in the present study aids in comprehending the human psyche as a result of the pain and suffering endured. Additionally, textual analysis has been used as a research method in the current research. Catherine Belsey’s model of textual analysis has been employed which she presents in her essay titled *Textual Analysis as a Research Method* (2013). Textual analysis, as an exploratory research method, aids the qualitative approach in investigating trauma through a diverse pluralistic paradigm.

3.4.1 Research Method

Research methods are regarded as the various strategies that a researcher uses to facilitate his understanding and gain new insights about a particular area of study (Griffin 3). There are diverse research methods employed for Humanities but textual analysis can be regarded as one of the most used methods. It relies on aspects such as

originality, creativity, and cultures we live in or examine (McKee 73). McKee further states that,

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology- a data-gathering process – for those researchers who want to understand how members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live (1).

Moreover, textual analysis, specifically Catherine Belsey's model of textual analysis, in the present study, is structured to supplement the methodological as well as the conceptual design. The goal of this *modus operandi* is to evaluate the selected literary works in an explicit and detailed manner.

Belsey, in her essay, uses textual analysis to analyze the painting of Tarquin and Lucretia to illuminate the significance and complexities involved in the usage of this research method. The painting of Tarquin and Lucretia portrays a moment of extreme magnitude that is just about to occur. The horror about to take place in the painting is the rape of Lucretia at the hands of Tarquin. The image of brutality which Belsey analyzes in her essay can also be regarded as an acute study of trauma that conforms to the current analysis. The present research also focuses on the study of the depiction of trauma and violence in the selected texts. Belsey's nuanced understanding of the traumatic incident about to happen facilitates the present study of traumatic experiences. She considers this method as an "irreplaceable" tool of research utilized to comprehend the presence of culture inscribed within the texts (157). This particular notion of Belsey also pertains to the current study which can be seen as established around the basis of culture. Her idea relates to what Michelle Balaev purports in her conceptual studies. Balaev's reliance on culture for the study of trauma is highlighted in the present research. One of the ideas she posits is her notion about silence regarding trauma. She purports that silence performs under a variety of cultural confinements. It relies on the societal culture that what should be spoken about or what should remain hidden. Consequentially, the use of such a narrative strategy signifies the gravity of the traumatic situation.

The present study is carried out based on cultural, social, and historical context analyzed in the selected texts, which is structured on Belsey's arguments as she

analyzes the painting from the context of these aspects as well. An amalgamation of both Belsey and Balaev is demonstrated through the present investigation. This can be observed from the focus of the present research on areas of analysis that inculcate the complex psychological and social factors that deeply impact the victim's comprehension of a traumatic incident. An analysis of trauma has been propagated through the commingling of diverse contextual characteristics including protagonist, place, period, culture, landscape, etc. which structure the emotions and narrative of the traumatic experience of the characters in the selected texts. Balaev though relies on the analysis of modern American novels to convey her ideas. Whereas, the following analysis which extends over three chapters, is based on two contemporary fictional texts featuring characters from Arabic countries such as Palestine and Syria.

While analyzing the painting of Tarquin and Lucretia, Belsey further posits certain aspects which can be employed to carry out a textual analysis. As, the following analysis is a literary study, utilizing the strategies and techniques posed by Belsey can be seen as a pertinent step to engage in a just interpretation of the selected texts. She highlights the notion of the multiplicity of meanings that a text yields and rejects the finality of meaning. According to Balaev the extreme experience of trauma also leads to numerous and diverse responses. Moreover, the present study engages in an analysis that makes use of Balaev's notions which attempt to encompass a pluralistic model of analyzing trauma. This emphasizes the diversity and abundance of possible interpretations and strategies involved. As detailed above in the framework of the study, the study of trauma from a pluralistic standpoint moves away from the previous traditional stance of studying trauma which is geared towards a monolithic perspective of only viewing trauma from a psychological outlook.

Belsey also illuminates the significance accorded to the text itself to do an analysis. She rejects the use of previously used vocabulary which made use of words such as "forces" or "makes" (163), about the process of traditional interpretation. She stresses the distinct relationship between a reader and a text. Belsey states that "There may be dialogue within a text, but the text itself also engages in dialogue with the reader" (163). This signifies the multitudinous possibilities that a text represents which leads to the utilization of critical vocabulary such as "invites" and "offers" particular positions to a viewer (163). The present analysis also engages in a study that follows the critical stance of Belsey by according due significance to the text and employing

vocabulary which does not confine the boundaries of interpretation, rather, makes room for a wide range of possibilities.

CHAPTER 4

THE FUNCTION OF THE TRAUMATIZED PROTAGONIST

According to Balaev, a trauma novel refers to a literary work that communicates a sense of deep loss or extreme fear on a collective as well as individual level. She claims that one of the most significant aspects that can be identified with a trauma novel is the transfiguration of the self that takes place due to an external and frequently brutal incident that highlights the self and the world. The outward experience can include varying situations such as war, natural calamities, or individual experiences such as rape, abuse, etc. (149). This apt description of a trauma novel by Balaev corresponds with the two selected texts under consideration. One of the novels is by Hala Alyan titled *Salt Houses* (2017) which details a prevailing problem of the present times: the pain that the Palestinian's continue to bear at the loss of their homeland at the hands of Israel and their continuous struggle to recreate a life for themselves as refugees in unfamiliar territories. To signify the ramifications of such a complicated issue, Alyan follows the journey of the fictional Yacoub family through her novel as she depicts a picture of their traumatic lives across four generations. In the beginning, they live in a villa in Jaffa but are brutally wrenched from their beloved Palestine due to the Israeli invasion. The characters are perpetually uprooted and displaced and the family scatters all over the world.

Similarly, the novel *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) can be considered as an original masterpiece. It is a graphic narrative of Nour and her family, as their lives become increasingly fraught with a sense of loss and trauma, first due to the death of her beloved father, and then she and her family are deprived of their ancestral homeland Syria. In the novel, Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar expertly weaves two stories together as she describes the painful life of Nour and her remaining family of two sisters and mother. Through the character of Nour, another narrative is related to the audience which chronicles the tale of Rawiya and her adventures away from her home in a Syrian village as she becomes the apprentice of the map-maker Al-Idrisi. Joukhadar elegantly unfolds both narratives as they often overlap while describing the mutual suffering the characters endure in the past as well as the present. The general setting of the novel is commingled with chaos and inherent sorrow.

Furthermore, both these novels reflect each other as they portray homogenous traumatic situations which encapsulate the displacement of the characters from their homeland and resulting dispossession of their community and habitual existence. Additionally, the two texts discussed in the literary study can be seen as meeting the standard of a “trauma novel” (149) as described by Balaev. This can be seen as the analysis tends to convey the poignant sense of suffering and anguish that the characters undergo at both individual and collective proportions. The loss of their homeland and the ensuing trauma in a domesticated setting prevails in both of the texts conveying a narrative that is both familial and emotive. Moreover, the texts have been written by female writers featuring female protagonists as the men in the novels stand on the periphery. The female characters can be seen as primarily promoting the action of the stories whereas the male characters are not depicted as stereotypical men involved in some active exertions rather they possess a soft and nurturing personality. Additionally, the novels tend to articulate the experiences of privileged households who are financially stable and can fend for themselves as opposed to the refugees frequently depicted in such texts who live in extremely dire situations. Through such a portrayal, both Alyan and Joukhadar attempt to shift the focus from people and conditions that consistently feature in such traumatic situations by allowing for a more diverse and pluralistic interpretation of traumatic experiences of individuals, who may possess certain stability in their lives but still endure varying forms of physical and psychological trauma.

The protagonists of the two texts *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) outline the experience of a larger population with explicit emphasis on the habitual lives of the people not directly linked to war, rather, the families who suffer the repercussions of war and are forced to abandon their homes. As Balaev claims that,

“The trauma novel provides a picture of the individual that suffers but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an “everyperson” figure. Indeed, a significant purpose of the protagonist is often to reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender, have collectively experienced massive trauma” (155).

Therefore, as posited above by Balaev, the present analysis aims to present a traumatized protagonist, who relies on his ability to bring into cognizance the preciseness associated with individual trauma that is frequently linked to vast cultural

ideologies and social features. While examining trauma in the selected texts it can be scrutinized that the protagonists are conventional individuals who undergo suffering. One of their roles can be recognized as their purpose to ascribe to a time in the past in which a group of people corresponding to a specific gender, culture, society, or race collectively underwent trauma. This consequentially magnifies the suffering and devastation which can be caused by war, rape, displacement, torture, or any other form of mental or physical barbarity. Thus, the traumatically inclined protagonist depicts how trauma is experienced and remembered in a specific place and culture.

Considering the diverse multiplicity of meanings portrayed through the protagonist, which is supported by Belsey's notion of a plurality of meaning, renders their role supremely significant for the examination of trauma in literature through the lens of textual analysis. Such an interpretation advances from the previous pathological perspective. Fictional portrayals frequently allude to traumatized protagonists as people who have distinct and positive powers, some unique knowledge that can help others. For instance, in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), the protagonist Billy Pilgrim has the skill to travel through time. He has the singular ability to experience time in the form of past, present, and future as if everything is happening before him simultaneously. In *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), the protagonist Nour possesses synesthesia which allows her to see and smell colors, an ability that proves significantly helpful several times in the text.

The protagonists of both the literary texts under consideration can be regarded as essentially unique. Alia from *Salt Houses* (2017), plays three distinct roles throughout the length of the novel which expounds multiple responses to trauma. Through varying incidents like the initial Six-Day War of 1967, then the First Intifada in 1987, the Gulf War (1990), the Second Intifada during 2000, 9/11 in 2001, and lastly the 2006 Lebanon War, which takes place throughout her life, a diversity of responses is depicted. In the timeline of such traumatic incidents, Alia particularly experiences the cultural discord established through the course of *Salt Houses* (2017), which she can be seen rebelling against. Whereas, the protagonist of *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), Nour derives her uniqueness due to being the child protagonist of the text. In the novel, the family's journey spanning across several countries of the Middle East has been related from the perspective of Nour. This is in contrast to *Salt Houses* (2017), which depicts events through a vast array of characters giving an impression that the

text is in actuality several short stories combined. On the other hand, *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), portrays everything through the eyes of Nour. Her status as the protagonist of the novel is further highlighted due to her synesthesia. The other characters are portrayed only through her perspective which along with her unique condition coupled with her childish innocence sets her apart and delineates a singular representation of trauma. Another feature that affirms her status as a child protagonist can be observed, from the subtle but crucial fact that throughout the course of the text, the names of both Nour's mother and father are not mentioned as Nour refers to them as her 'Baba' and 'Mama' just like any other child. This illuminates the vivid attention to detail that Joukhadar offers to aptly portray trauma from the point of view of a child.

Additionally, both novels present a diverse and complex view of memory which is not restrained to a single and monolithic representation of trauma that haunts the characters. Rather, the process of remembering for the characters is a revisionary phenomenon that is malleable in nature. It is open to influence by present aspects such as the person's needs, personality, and the social and cultural factors involved. Moreover, as Balaev establishes that the experience of trauma, as well as the memories associated with that event, are involved in transforming the past view of self about the society and the world. In this, it can be evidenced that the characters are not highlighted as people who have a pathologically split existence. Rather, it is analyzed that the pain they go through allows them the chance to shape themselves differently as opposed to their past. They are involved in the reformulation of their consciousness and are not regarded as people who infect others with their contaminated selves.

For instance, the novel *Black Sun* (1971), by Edward Abbey, details the harrowing tale of a man Will Gatlin, who is a forest park ranger near the site of the Grand Canyon. Gatlin's trauma stems from the loss of his girlfriend who is missing presumed dead before the beginning of the novel. Certain features drawn from the narrative can be contemplated as being parallel to the selected literary works. The disappearance of Sandy forces Gatlin in an unresolved state of loss. The memories of the peaceful time they previously spent together mutilate his current existence. Similarly, in *Salt Houses* (2017), in one particular scene of the text, Alia stands by the kitchen window in her home in Kuwait and is suddenly flooded by memories of her past in Amman (57), when her mother used to cook her delicious meals and the fragrance of mint that wafted through the kitchen window. These pleasurable memories

of her past are damaged in the present due to the recent death of her mother and now she struggles to shun them from her mind to not be reminded of them.

4.1 Nour's Journey as the Protagonist of *The Map of Salt and Stars*

In *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), Nour's father is the most predominant part of her life. The death of Nour's father is not directly alluded to in the text. This can be analyzed as a willful strategy by the writer to magnify Nour's role as the protagonist of the novel.

“The island of Manhattan's got holes in it, and that's where Baba sleeps. When I said good night to him, the white bundle of him sagged so heavy, the hole they dug for him so deep. And there was a hole in me too, and that's where my voice went. It went into the earth with Baba, deep in the white bone of the earth, and now it's gone” (3).

This is further highlighted through the memories which swirl in Nour's mind about her past with her father throughout the course of the narrative. It is important to signify that none of the other characters hold such memories of the dead member of their family, further emphasizing the role of Nour whose eyes are the only lens through which Joukhadar weaves this very recent loss. Thus, Nour can be regarded as the sole proprietor of this inherent weight of trauma which she carries as a collective representative for the rest of her family.

Instead of depicting the trauma of his death through a sole agonizing memory that haunts her ceaselessly, Nour goes through several memories regarding her father at different stages in the text which resonates with what she is enduring at that precise moment of experience. Furthermore, it can be observed that Nour undergoes a prompt transition between the memories of her father to her current reality. This can be textually analyzed as the fluidity of meaning accorded to the varying memories of traumatic suffering. Additionally, this flexibility of memories can be seen as a dynamic process of recall. Therefore, this can be regarded in direct opposition to the traditional experience of trauma which considers a universally rigid remembrance of an incident of trauma as opposed to a revisionary phenomenon. The silence plaguing Nour due to her experience of trauma may be a verbal affliction in her but it is not a form of psychological muteness as she constantly goes through multiple memories of her father.

Moreover, the novel initiates with the death of Nour's father due to cancer. The incident of trauma regarding his death and burial is not referred to straightforwardly rather, Nour's memories of her father are the only evidence of the trauma that the family has suffered. This not only signifies Nour's role as a protagonist, but it can also be interpreted as a contrast to the silenced emptiness of trauma enveloping the other characters: Nour's mother, Zahra, and Huda. Even Nour is unable to voice the trauma that she is suffering from "My words sunk down like seeds..." and "...Mama lost her words too" (3). Nour strives to repudiate the speechlessness that torments her by narrating the tale of Rawiya that her father used to tell her before his death. Throughout the length of the whole text, she describes Rawiya's story as she goes through more trauma. Moreover, the act of shunning the speechlessness which afflicts Nour, can be examined from Balaev's perspective of drawing away from the previous model of the traditional study of trauma which depended on the analysis of the pathological unspeakability of the characters as its focal point, to a diverse pluralistic model of research which focuses on the varying methods including contextual factors that contribute to the trauma of the characters and how they reformulate themselves as a consequence.

Furthermore, the tale of Rawiya, which Nour narrates to herself through *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), can be textually analyzed as a form of resistance which she employs against the trauma induced by the exploitative forces which took her homeland away from her and permanently uprooted her existence. This magical realist story within the text is deeply fantastical in nature. Rawiya and her group are embroiled in political conspiracies regarding their ambitious project to map the world. Danger of another kind lurks over them in the form of the mythical creature: the Roc. The Roc threatens their expedition and wants to kill Rawiya for blinding him in one eye. The presence of the Roc adds to the fantastical element of the story and points to the intertextuality of the text, as this gigantic bird features in other Middle Eastern tales as well including *One Thousand and One Nights* originally published as far back as 1704. This amalgamation of fantastical characteristics with political intrigue which Rawiya faces at the hands of the primordial Almohads and Fatimid Empires who both aspire Al-Idrisi's maps to win against each other conveys an apt representation of magical realism. These elements of magical realism draw attention to the trauma that Nour is going through as her life mirrors that of the trials faced by Rawiya. Even though the

experiences which are happening to Nour are occurring in a world apart from Rawiya's tale, the trauma she endures resembles that of Rawiya. The evidence of this can be observed from how Rawiya loses her trusted friend and companion Bakr, the same way in which Nour loses Abu Sayeed, her father's adopted brother who was deeply similar to her father in his ways and reminded her of him. The loss of Abu Sayeed is excruciatingly traumatic for Nour as he not only dies while trying to save her but his death also symbolizes the loss of a father figure in her life all over again.

Moreover, the novel *Melal: A Novel of the Pacific* (2002), offers several aspects regarding the protagonists which can be seen as similar to the protagonist Nour of *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018). The Keju brothers featured in the work, have been forcefully displaced from their homeland due to the atomic testing by the U.S government on the Pacific Islands. Robert Barclay, the author, merges stories from the mythological era with the contemporary times to represent a unique perspective of the life that people live in the Pacific. Through most of the novel, mythological creatures are weaved in reality which is like the text, *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), as Joukhadar also connects people and creatures from mythological stories like the Roc and the map maker Al-Idrisi, to depict the trauma in a contextual setting. This can be analyzed as a narrative strategy to stipulate that such stories are an essential part of dealing with trauma for the characters.

In Melal: A Novel of the Pacific, as the Keju brothers struggle to locate their ancestral home and deal with the socio-economic crisis and geographic displacement, their precarious situation is symbolized by Barclay through a battle being fought in the sky between mythological creatures connecting both struggles. Similarly, the protagonist Nour constantly suffers through various traumatic situations one of which includes the death of her beloved friend Abu Sayeed

“But he misses the raft. Abu Sayeed tumbles down into the cold dark, landing with a spray of salt... Rescue boats come, crisscrossing the waves with their spotlights. Abu Sayeed's hand reaches up toward mine through the green, way down below us, and then his wind away from me into the onyx black, and he's gone” (186).

This can also be linked to the loss of Rawiya at her fellow apprentice's Bakr's death. Both Bakr and Abu Sayeed sacrifice themselves which further adds to the similarity of

the two incidents and focuses Joukhadar's stance on the meeting of mythological past and present to magnify the excruciating pain that Nour suffers.

Additionally, Nour, as the protagonist of the novel, undergoes numerous transformations including the physically and mentally torturous incident when Nour's mother is forced to shave her head due to lice. The action of Nour getting her head shaven exposes the physical as well as the psychological trauma she tolerates as her visible beauty is snatched from her. Moreover, the lice are an infestation that plague Nour. This can be interpreted that, like Nour, Syria can also be seen as being infested by the heavy shelling and bombing. Additionally, further implications of such an action can be considered especially traumatic as Nour's mother states that "It's better if people think..." (146), signaling towards horrors from which she wants to protect Nour.

"I rub my smooth head. Out the window, the steppe shimmers at the city's fingertips. The farther I go, the bigger the world seems to be, and it always seems easier to leave a place than it is to come back. Did I ever let myself believe it would be easy to get back to the States, as easy as Sitt Shadid giving us the room next to hers?" (146)

Her bare scalp denotes the naked reality of war. While having her head shaved she recalls the absence of photographs in which she is with her father and her long hair which demonstrates the non-existence of mundane objects from the lives of the victims portrayed through Nour as trauma leaves a person with nothing. Another physical symbol of trauma can be established as Nour getting her menstruation for the first time towards the conclusion of the novel (317). Her bleeding can be analyzed as a physical manifestation of her reconfiguration as the experiences of the trauma she underwent induced her transformation.

Furthermore, during the cruel separation from her mother and beloved sister Huda, with no security about their fates in Libya, Nour undergoes reformulation of self as she loses a part of her childhood and matures dynamically. This can be recognized from the lines in which she is sinking in the sea,

"I open my eyes underwater, clawing for the rock...I don't know which way is up...I tumble with my feet above my head...I expect myself to panic. I expect the fact that I'm alone to punch me, but it doesn't. Instead, a small voice comes from far away, telling me calmly that no one is coming to help" (265-266).

This stipulates the loss of her innocence due to such a traumatic experience. Even when she calls out to Zahra after this ordeal, the change in voice can be interpreted as not just caused by the excess water gulped but as a change in her personality, indicating another sign of maturation as transformations occur in a person's voice with time. Furthermore, again the use of trauma imagery is heightened as both the salt of Nour's tears and the salt of the sea are seen mingling together as her eyes sting from it (266). This can be interpreted as the sea's anatomy of saltiness being an epitome of trauma imagery. Additionally, this ordeal retraumatizes Nour as she is reminded of her memories of Abu Sayeed drowning in the Nile. For some time she is unable to locate Zahra in the water as she appears in and out of her line of sight and Nour is hurtled back to her memories of Abu Sayeed and she is paralyzed by the fear of losing another family member. This memory can be seen as the projection of the inner turmoil that Nour suffers from due to the continuous traumatic events on her journey.

Another vital incident that points to Nour's reconfiguration of self, is the textual incident in which Abu Sayeed's last memento, his handkerchief which Nour saved while he drowned is about to be ripped from her. Even though the water forcefully snatches it away from her, she grasps it and stuffs it inside her pocket. This calls attention to the fact that since the sea can be regarded as a symbol of Nour's trauma, her action of seizing onto her memories highlights her desire to fight against its forceful intrusion. It signifies that she varies in letting go of her past. She wants to hold onto it as memories of the past are the sole thing she has now. This can be further exemplified from the memories of her father that spiral in her mind. At the morgue, she threw up and her "...guts wrung themselves like wet laundry" (268). This vivid imagery highlights the vulnerability and helplessness she felt at the death of her father. This corresponds to how she felt when she was stranded on the shore when she signifies that "...we hang like linen" (267). This feeling of a disjointed connection she is exposed to due to the loss of her father can be likened to the manner she clutches onto the handkerchief of Abu Sayeed. Nour is also reminded of the fountain where she and her father used to go as a child and she even waits there for a long time after seeing his dead body for his ghost to arrive. The realization that she underwent during that time of being alone, can be recognized as registering now in the present when she is finally able to come to terms with fact that she has to endure her trauma alone without the guidance of her beloved father.

Additionally, to get to Algeria, Nour and her sister Zahra, are forced to cross the border illegally adding to the slew of traumatic incidents that occur to them during their period of displacement. The trauma of living in a smuggler's house with several other people sharing the same space, with no respect for privacy can be envisaged as a mentally scarring event for Nour (272). The deplorable prison-like conditions of the room the people are all stuffed into is an evocative display of trauma imagery. Nobody is allowed to leave, flies buzz menacingly, bread is tossed at them like animals being thrown food to eat. At the beginning of the novel, Nour is unable to fully grasp the Arabic language in which her family and the people around her converse in but over time, she can comprehend what is being spoken. This can be interpreted as a representation of her transformation as a consequence of the atrocious incidents she has witnessed.

After her separation from Huda and her mother along with her getting nearly torpedoed to death and Zahra drowning, it can be observed that she has now gained complete clarity of the language which previously eluded her. This can be appreciated from a particular occurrence at the smuggler's cottage. One of the men intending to cross the border is incapable of paying the full sum to the smugglers, which leads to his brutal beating at the hands of one of the smugglers' men.

“I have nothing, he shouts. I gave you everything I had. The door slams shut. Around us, people let out their air, uncoiling tensed necks. Outside the window, hard wood claps against muscle. The father shouts and begs. Coins tinkle in the dirt. My heart slams against my lungs, and I bury my face in Zahra's belly” (282).

This incident is deeply traumatic as well as a source of her transformation as she can understand completely what transpires between the two men. This previously she would not have been able to do. This is further illuminated from the exchange that takes place between Zahra and her, in which the former inquiries from her that "You didn't understand any of that. Right?" (283), to which Nour replies in the negative. Before this experience in the text, Nour's family is always trying to shield her from sordid realities by speaking in Arabic and letting her stay in the dark. Now, from this textual occurrence, it can be signified that a reversal of role has taken place. Nour has altered due to her traumatic experiences to such an extent that she is now protecting her sister

from the truth as she knows how devastated she would be if she knew that Nour was no longer the child she was at the onset of this tumultuous journey.

Despite the changes that have occurred in Nour's personality, she still retains her status as a child protagonist which can be evidenced from the text. There is an inherent juxtaposition of her child-like gestures against the harshness of the surroundings. This can be noted when the man is being beaten up by the smuggler she buries her face in Zahra's belly, which points to her inner child-like desire to block the anguish she sees and hears around her. This incident denotes her pain of being able to understand the world around her when she clearly seeks the comfort of her mother's womb, hence the burial of her face in the familiar substitute of her sister's lap. This distinct action also indicates the changing dynamics of the relationship between the two sisters as formerly, Zahra and Nour were unable to reconcile with each other due to their opposing personalities. Now it can be construed that Nour feels the same sense of comfort with Zahra which she feels with Huda. Furthermore, there are several textual instances in which Nour refers to breathing as "let out their air" (282). This can be deemed as profoundly significant in light of the present analysis of trauma, as it exposes the simple, straightforward act of breathing as something which requires immense exertion due to their circumstances. Not just for herself, Nour also uses this phrase for the people around her, in a collective representation of the trauma. This further stipulates that breathing has become a tense chore for them to survive, a previously natural thing which they now have become unaccustomed to, insinuating the gravity of psychological and physical pain of Nour and the people around her.

Thus, the weight of being the protagonist which Nour carries on her shoulders can be understood from the scene in which her mother takes her to a street in Damascus while Huda is being treated in the hospital for the shrapnel that embeds her due to the bombing. Nour just wants to stop and tell anyone who will listen to her the trauma of seeing her house being laid to waste in front of her eyes. She wants to articulate her experience and wants to break the wall of silence inside of her. As the protagonist, she is burdened to carry this trauma inside her as she represents the people whose homes were dismembered right in front of them as they watched helplessly. The psychological trauma she endures is aptly described through her question "How can life go on like it always did?" (103).

4.2 Alia “A Child of War”; the Traumatized Protagonist of *Salt Houses*

One particular similarity, which draws attention to the protagonists of the two novels can be regarded as the death of their fathers in the very beginning. Moreover in *Salt Houses* (2017), Alyan writes in such a manner that nearly all the characters that feature in the novel, narrate the chapters from their point of view. This gives an impression that the entire novel is a collection of short stories featuring the same characters. This connects the text in one single whole. Additionally, even the chapters are not numbered, rather, they are named after the characters in the text itself. One of the reasons Alia can be perceived as the protagonist is that aside from two chapters that are narrated from her point of view, the epilogue is also told from Alia’s perspective. The varying stages of displacement that Alia goes through can be traced through the analysis of her narrative.

For Alia, the pre-displacement era of her life can be regarded as the brief time she spent in Jaffa with her family of which she has rare memories. The time that Alia spent in Nablus following her disruption from Jaffa, can be judged as her life before the atrocities of the six-day war of Palestine. The chapters written from Alia's point of view begin with her dislocation to Kuwait, where her mother Salma bids her go to visit her elder sister Widad, who feels unwell. From the very beginning, Alia shows profound disdain towards this trip as she has no desire to leave her home in Nablus as well as her husband Atef and brother Mustafa. She feels distant towards her elder sister Widad, and the scorching heat of Kuwait completely numbs her senses. Alia’s apparent distaste towards this trip can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the catastrophes that would befall the Yacoub family, which include the death of Mustafa and the arrest of Atef.

Moreover, if Widad, serves as a painful bond to Jaffa then Alia, the protagonist, can be analyzed as the nostalgic bond to Jaffa for their mother, Salma. Alia’s role as a traumatized protagonist in the life of her mother is nostalgic albeit a traumatic link to her homeland Jaffa.

“All her children are prized; they are the glow of her. It is more that Salma has always felt drawn to her, a magnetism delicate and stubborn as cobweb thread. Alia is a child of war. She was barely three when the Israeli army rolled through

Jaffa's streets, the tanks smashing the marketplace, the soldiers dragging half-sleeping men from their homes" (5).

"Alia is a child of war" (5) as stated above is the line that Salma uses to describe Alia. This line is significant as Alia for Salma serves as a symbol of the past she was forced to sacrifice. She is a living reminder of the life that Salma and the others had before the atrocities of war. Salma implies through her words that Alia is her favorite child. The reason for such preference lies in the fact that Alia always reminded Salma of the beauty of her long-lost home. The lines "Salma missed her home with a tenacity that never quiet abated" (6) signifies this notion. Alia fuelled this yearning of Salma through the unblemished naivety which she possessed as a child. Traumatizing images haunt Salma of the war she experienced, of her home and orange groves being attacked "Within days the groves were mangled, soil impaled with wooden stakes, oranges scattered, pulp leaking from the battered flesh" (5-6).

Alia reminds Salma of the beauty of her home as she "...spoke with the reverence of a mythologist about the enormous Jaffa pomegranates..." (7), for which Salma feels forever grateful to her. The use of the word "mythologist" (7) by Alyan is significant as it can be seen as implying the fact that the home that Salma and her family left has indeed become a myth, a place of trauma and ashes, a place whose stories akin to myths just exist in their memories. Alia serves as a double connection for Salma as she not only bonds Salma to Jaffa the principal place of her trauma but also through Nablus the place where they were forced to dislocate as a result of the war. The wedding of Alia which was supposed to be a momentous occasion is marred with the advent of the oncoming trauma that Salma sees in her future. Thus trauma is transferred from Salma to Alia, in a cultural context which is the norm of cup reading at wedding ceremonies.

All the events following up to Alia's wedding have been discussed signifying the analysis of Alia as a protagonist against the backdrop of cultural traditions. The cup reading ritual, henna ceremony, the food which is being which is a Kanafeh a cultural Palestinian dessert, the people in the garden women discussing Egyptian soaps, and men arguing over the failed politics of the country all highlight the societal practices which are followed in a cultural Palestinian wedding ceremony. The presence of trauma is in turn embedded in this cultural context. The trauma manifests itself through the cup reading custom as outwardly Salma is content to wed her daughter but the dark pallor

of disruption and displacement in her future cannot be overlooked. This in actuality foreshadows the turmoil that will rear its head and terrorize the generations to come. As a member of the first generation of the Yacoub family that experiences trauma, Salma's character goes through a series of alterations with the most prominent being the way she tends to avoid the presence of trauma by shying away from it. This wariness results in the incomplete truth which she tells Alia about what she has observed closing her eyes to the unsettling details of her future.

Furthermore, the relationship between Alia and the two pre-dominant men of her life, Mustafa and Atef can be deemed as potentially intricate in nature. In the novel, Mustafa once alludes to the relationship that all three of them share as

“His casual lifestyle is underpinned by Alia and Atef, residing several streets over, their lives spilling into one another's. They all check in daily, usually gathering at Salma's house... Mustafa loves the permeability of their days, the way he and the two people he loves most revolve around each other like planets” (29).

The above lines are greatly suggestive as the use of the phrase spilling into each other's lives denotes the extent to which their lives were convoluted together to the point that if one suffers from a trauma the other is also embroiled in the same pain and torment. Similarly, the other line in which Mustafa refers to their lives revolving around each other indicates the overpowering sense of trauma that follows his death in the lives of Alia and Atef as a result. The relationship shared by the three of them can be distinctly recognized as a comradeship, a staunch companionship that forms as a consequence of their collective trauma. All three of them lost their childhood homes and fathers to the invasion of Jaffa. Mustafa and Atef have similar ideas regarding a revolution to take back their land, Palestine from the Israeli forces and are members of the brotherhood in the mosque. Moreover, Alia spends most of her time with them during her childhood and adulthood as she is unlike other girls of her age. She is sturdy and resilient as Mustafa refers to her. Their alliance becomes final with her marriage to Atef. This unshakable alliance sorrowfully snaps with the death of Mustafa with which neither Alia nor Atef can reconcile with.

For Alia, Mustafa's presence in her life can be seen having vast magnitude as he can be perceived as someone who symbolized a father figure for her in the absence

of her real father. Mustafa can be noted as someone who fills the void left behind by the father that Alia barely remembers as a result of the invasion of Jaffa. They share an inseparable bond as Mustafa is not just her brother but can also be regarded as the man who truly understood her, a bond she is unable to establish with Atef even after their marriage and something which becomes unfathomable after Mustafa's death. The extent of the understanding that both Alia and Mustafa have about each other can be witnessed from a deeply significant fact regarding Mustafa's personality. She is the only one in whom Mustafa confides his darkest secret which is his hatred for his absent father. This dark confession of Mustafa only to Alia signifies the strength of their bond as for Mustafa this secret is of great magnitude as he blames his father for not leaving behind any legacy to follow in his footsteps. The trauma which Mustafa suffers due to this results in not only hatred but blossoms into a sense of shame he feels for having such a pathetic father who died defeated and broken.

From Alia's perspective, the childhood memory which invades unremittingly during the period of uncertainty, when there is no news of either Mustafa or Atef from Nablus can be witnessed to understand the place of Mustafa in Alia's life. When Alia was a child, Mustafa came across a chick soaked in rain which he took home with him and nursed back to health, even letting Alia touch the creature. This memory intrudes on Alia's senses over and over again during the Six-day war which illuminates the significance of Mustafa in Alia's life as she is not reminded of Atef her husband but rather of Mustafa repeatedly. For Alia, this memory holds import as it focuses on how she viewed Mustafa as a hero, a savior of lost and pitiful things. He in actuality saved her as well as he filled the gap left behind by her father which can be observed from

“Alia sat by her brother’s side, both of them silent as he worked. Every few minutes she bent over the shoe, peering at the quivering bird...It felt like an honor, sitting by her brave, handsome brother while wind battered the windows with rain” (62).

With Mustafa, "Alia felt big, bigger than ever before..." (62), which further indicates the influence of him on her. Alia is thus traumatized by Mustafa's death and to add to her psychological scars, the last memory she has of Mustafa is when she leaves for Kuwait in anger without even saying farewell to him. It can be assumed that the guilt of such pettiness on Alia further pierce the wounds of her mental state giving her no sense of appeasement.

Additionally, the trauma of losing her homeland and home also takes a heavy toll on Alia and Atef. Mustafa can be seen as playing the part of a binding force, someone who was beloved to both of them as even both Alia and Atef got married due to him being Atef's dearest friend. Mustafa can be regarded as the sole reason for their union and after his death, Alia and Atef drift apart. Aside from Mustafa, Alia also goes through the loss of her husband after the invasion. Physically Atef returns to his wife after his imprisonment and torture by the Israeli forces during the six-day war, but mentally Atef is subjected to extreme trauma and it alters his personality. Being the protagonist of the novel, Alia can be appreciated as a representative of the collective experience of trauma. She lost her father, her brother and her husband if not physically then mentally to the disruption and chaos that the loss of their home due to Israeli forces is waged upon them. The heavy scarring that Atef procures as a result of his time in prison can be perceived as signaling towards the re-traumatization of the prior loss of Hussam, Alia's father. Through the wounds on Atef's body, it can be discerned that Alia goes through a re-experiencing of the slow and painful death of her father whose body was ravaged by lung cancer. Even though she is a child at the time of his death, Alia still says "Baba is not hurt anymore?"(5), which demonstrates the deep effect of trauma on her as a child which later resurfaces through her husband as even though she provides him with comfort, the scars on his body frighten her as they can be regarded as an agonizing reminder of her childhood.

Furthermore, Atef pleads with desperation to Alia about his desire to resettle in Kuwait instead of Amman but for Alia Amman represents

“... her mother, her aunts, to the cousins and childhood friends who moved there from Nablus after the war. The idea had struck her like rainfall, simple and clear... Instead of staying in Kuwait's wasteland, the endless afternoons of television and heat, let them go to Amman...” (59).

When Atef disagrees and Alia loses her composure and rushes out to find Ajit, the chauffeur and he drives her to the sea. This incident can be envisaged as a portentous event for Alia as it reconfigures her future self. The trauma of permanently settling in Kuwait influences Alia psychologically. The entire act of desperately rushing out of the party to find Ajit can be gauged as Alia's way of trying to escape her fate in some manner. She wants to escape from her trauma but it is inevitable due to her pregnancy as well as her mother's words. After the death of Mustafa, Salma impresses upon Alia

not to forget her husband in her sorrow. This suggests how Alia feels bound to her duties as a wife providing a view of trauma in a cultural context. As a wife and soon-to-be mother, she feels captive of these cultural constructs which restrain her from mourning the sorrow of the loss of Mustafa and her home in her way which she wanted to do by going to Amman to be around her mother and relatives. Instead, she is denied this means of healing by her husband. Throughout this incident, Alia oscillates with trying to reconcile herself to this disruptive transformation in her life as well as the traumatically haunting memories of Nablus that plague her mind.

On the one hand, Alia is reminded of Nablus and Mustafa, which the writer portrays through small but significant details as Alia longs for her bedroom in Nablus, her photographs, jewelry, and even a dress she brought before this cursed trip but never got to wear. Along with such painful memories, the words of her mother echo in the deep recesses of her mind and the constraints they pose for her triumph in the end as she stays in Kuwait by resignedly saying at the end of this trip "So this is the beginning" (76). This trip is something which Alia refers to as an adventure in her mind given the air of lightheartedness that Ajit and Alia both feel with each other and which the sea provides them. It can be contemplated as a trip where Alia loses her vivaciousness and becomes dispirited as can be observed through a remark that Linah, her granddaughter makes later on in the novel which aptly represents how abject she has become due to her traumatic experiences "Linah likes her grandmother but is slightly afraid of her, her razor-sharp nails and the way she glances over whatever room she is in, like she is bored"(242).

Aside from the trauma that Alia suffers, of having to follow the norms of her culture through her role as a wife and a mother, she is also subjected to mental strain and tension through the cultural context in another manner. The invasion not only seizes her home and brother from her but she is also afflicted by the loss of her cultural traditions. Alia is reminded of the silver ibrik her mother gave to her at her wedding which also vanishes along with Nablus, symbolizing the painful loss of their cultural tradition of giving an ibrik to the daughters at their wedding. The permanent removal of such a loving tradition from their lives due to the trauma of the invasion can be evidenced in the rest of the novel as Alia does not gift an ibrik to either one of her daughters highlighting the transmission of trauma to the future generations.

Furthermore, another accurate example of this is illuminated through the story of the Bedouin, told to her by Widad which Alia feels strongly connected with.

According to Widad, the Bedouin who first came to Kuwait lived simple and uncomplicated lives before the onslaught of villa compounds and other buildings sprawled over the city heralding the younger generation. According to Karen Till “Places haunted by past structures of meaning may also evoke, confront, or encrypt transgenerational phantoms” (56). Alia contrasts the Bedouin to her elders in Nablus who also lived with the memories of Palestine, the ensuing war, and exodus. For Alia, both the Palestinians and the Bedouin indicate the trauma of losing their cultural traditions, sometimes due to the transforming society as in the case of the Bedouin and at other times it is wrested from them due to war and strife. Her Palestinian cultural roots are lost forever leading to Alia feeling a certain kinship to this past generation. She can be considered as standing on the very cusp of transformation as well. Her life after the war and the traumatic losses it underscores for her is forever transformed. She undergoes this alteration, the tortured yearning for her home and brother which she passes on to her future generation. As Maria Trumarkin states that, “for places across the world marked by traumatic legacies of violence, suffering, and loss, the past is never quite over” (12).

For Alia, Kuwait existed as "a temporary sojourn" (59). The use of the word sojourn by the writer is greatly explicit. Sojourn refers to a temporary resting place and this is what Alia always believed Kuwait to be for her. Atef's refusal to move to Amman and to permanently reside in Kuwait psychologically traumatizes Alia as her husband refuses to understand her anxiety. Rather she is stuck in Kuwait, a limbo-like place forever. Alia even throws a big New Year's celebration party to distract herself from the horrific trauma of the previous year and to tell Atef about her idea to move to Amman but this can be construed as a futile resolve on her part as her worst fears sharpen into clarity as the realization dawns her through the haunting lines "All is lost. There will be no Amman. He believes Kuwait will save him, she realizes. Us" (70). All inevitably is lost as Alia and Atef's relationship gets fractured beyond repair after this disruptively traumatic decision. Through Alia's narrative, it is implied that when she is unaware of the fate of both her husband and brother she prays that if she could save one of them it would be her brother. This fact is not penned in the novel but can be gleaned from Alia's train of thought. This sordid truth about herself is also a cause of Alia's

psychological trauma. It shames her to such an extent that it can be argued that this is why she gives in to her husband's frenzied pleas without any flight for Amman.

Souad, Alia's youngest daughter, can be envisaged as such a major cause of Alia's psychological trauma that when she holds up a mirror in the shape of herself. She forces Alia to confront all the secret yearnings, frustrations, and shame she associates with Amman which can be observed from her tearful conversations of wanting to stay forever in Amman to her cousin by leaving Atef, her need to stay in a place akin to her prior home ran so deep that it even blinded her to her children as it can be implied from the lines "So it would go, the silent argument, back and forth in her mind until she loathed the sight of herself in the mirror. What kind of a mother, or wife, would consider such a fate-living apart from her children, moving to Amman" (145). These lines point to the fact that Alia is forced to face the demon inside her which she despises so much due to ironically her daughter which shatters her psychologically.

In addition to this, Souad for Alia can also be discussed as a prominent source of cultural shock. As Alia waits angrily for Souad to come home after she storms out earlier, Alia flips through the channels on the TV, and through this action of Alia, the changing times and culture are depicted in the novel. Alia makes comparisons between the style and fashion of the actresses she was used to seeing while growing up and the fashion trends that are now popular, leading her to think of Souad again as her daughter also dresses in the new manner which she dislikes. The life she led before the war and the loss of her home, Mustafa, and her mother are held in high esteem by Alia. The cultural shock that results from such a transforming society is an inherent cause of frustration and mental torment for Alia and as her daughter is a part of this changing culture Alia feels further alienated and isolated from her. Even though Alia refers to both her daughters as "The Miniskirt and the Veil" (134) in jest, but these nicknames can be noted as not carrying any warmth and are not terms of endearment from a mother to her children. Rather they emphasize the dissatisfaction and discontent that Alia endures psychologically. Alia's mental trauma is signified that her very own children are unaware of their particular roots and culture and her frustration at not being able to do anything about this.

Due to the physical and mental trauma that Alia endures, it can be distinguished that she is unable to relate to the psychological and social construct of motherhood. She is detached and estranged from them emotionally as well as physically which can be

evidenced by the way she would sometimes be completely oblivious to her surroundings see from Atef. Moreover, she even asks her maid Priya if could guide her by saying "Souad...she never listens. I talk, I yell. Nothing works. Do you know how she-why she...does the things she does?" (149). All such instances emphasize the depth of estrangement that she feels towards her children due to her trauma. The children especially Souad sensing this restlessness from their mother, mirror her in the same way through their personalities as later discussed in more detail displaying the transgenerational transference of trauma. Thus the physical and emotional isolation that she feels towards her children suggests the archetype of motherhood being negated by Alia.

After she argues with Souad, Alia feels deeply restless and unsettled even the next morning, unable to forget what had transpired last night and wants to lie back on her bed and go to sleep just as "she did as a child on rainy days" (150). This can be regarded as a testimony of the notion that Alia is still in many ways like a child who has been forced to grow up due to the traumatic experiences of her life. She still wants the childhood of her pre-displacement era that is Nablus. Salma once remarked about her daughter when she was naught but a child that "It would become the girl's most endearing and exasperating quality, how she could become enamored of things already gone" (7). This description can be contemplated as the very crux of her character, the driving force behind her psychological and physical turmoil. The same morning after she goes into the kitchen she is suddenly assaulted by the memory of her mother's kitchen back home in Nablus and she feels agonized by the image. As Alia is predisposed to being so enamored of her past experiences, she is unable to become accustomed to anything in her life post her displacement and resettlement. The memories of the past persistently pervade her consciousness leading to her devastating psychological trauma.

Alia as a traumatized protagonist also depicts another form of mental anguish that can be collected related to people who belong to her generation. This trauma stems from a cultural construct that is the language barrier that erupts between Alia and her grandchildren. She constantly scolds Karam and Souad by saying "You've raised these children as Americans. They barely understand what their grandmother is saying to them" (242). Due to the difference of language spoken between them, Alia who mostly converses in Arabic, and her grandchildren in English, the barrier created by this

predicament stands as a rift between them. Alia condemns the upbringing of Manar and Zain children of Souad as well as Karam's daughter Linah, referring to them as "spoiled ajnabi children" (203). These grievances of Alia represent the chaos of her psychological state. Not being able to even talk to your grandchildren as they are ignorant of their cultural traditions and especially their specific cultural language which is Arabic, can be discerned as something which traumatically agitates Alia. The American mannerisms and the language which her grandchildren have readily adopted agonizes Alia not only due to the sense of alienation she goes through but it can be observed as something which wounds her because this style of life which her children and now grandchildren adhere to, is in opposition to cultural roots and heritage which she represents.

According to Balaev, delineating the response to the experience of trauma in literary works emphasizes the diversity of representation. She signifies that people do not respond to trauma in a universally indistinguishable manner and without considering the cultural and individual factors involved in the incident and which essentially shatter the identity as is asserted by the traditional paradigm. Balaev substantiates her argument by pointing out that there are numerous examples of the approaches through which trauma is portrayed which include causing a mental illness which is relevant to *Salt Houses* (2017), as Alia is diagnosed with Alzheimer's. As Balaev states that irrespective of the change that occurs due to the experience of trauma and its memory, it propels the reformulation of self. She further adds that "The new knowledge may create a perspective of the world that views the self and/or world as sick, diseased, balanced, redeemed, resilient, transcendent, or mystical" (37).

Considering Alia, from the time she is diagnosed with Alzheimer's she increasingly becomes distant and detached from the rest of her family. Her disease can be taken as a symbol of her outer disruption manifests and becomes a part of her psychological deterioration as she is permanently scarred by trauma now both pathologically and mentally. This results in the changed way the protagonist of this novel reorients her sense of self as Alia carries the burden of her traumatic experiences repeatedly as she goes through her memories of the past. This illness of Alia functions to establish an antithesis between forgetting and remembering, which not only magnifies the rift between the past and the present. It also accentuates how the past consistently invades her present. Regardless of this situation the following lines,

“The words are familiar as water, as Alia’s own hands, which lift now to her face, against her cheeks...The song alights within Alia, a remembering akin to joy. Her mother’s garden, a courtyard somewhere in Kuwait, as she sang to a baby at her own breast. She sits in the dark, listening to the ancient, salvaged music” (310).

suggest that she does feel some sense of belonging and home towards the end of the text when she sees her granddaughter Manar feeding her infant daughter and singing her a lullaby in Arabic; the language of her home which can be seen as an indication of providing her with a sense of resilience to move forward.

CHAPTER 5

PRIMACY OF PLACE IN THE EXPLORATION OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

The primacy of the role of place as purported by Balaev in association to the traumatic phenomenon can be analyzed in the present research for a distinct comprehension of the two literary texts. The characters in both *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) are unable to settle down in their homeland which results in "an ironic tension that highlights the paradoxes of the modern human condition" (Balaev 91). The multiplicity of places featuring in both texts evoke a plurality of traumatic responses. Moreover, the significance of place can be considered from the way a certain place of traumatic experience alters for the characters to such an extent that it does not just remain an ordinary space but rather becomes a place accorded with varying value. This highlights the fluidity of the place of trauma as the meaning attached to it is relational and shifting. In addition, the merging of both the traditions of the past and the present connected to the place of agonizing events further signifies the role that these traditions play as a contextual element characterizing trauma in the selected texts. For the characters in both novels "Home is a place geographically situated and proximally close, yet uninhabitable, thereby creating perceptions of the self and world that feel at times discordant" (Balaev 100).

Furthermore, the concept of stages of migratory travel put forward by Reed Coughlan and Judith Owens-Manley, belonging to the field of sociology, tends to support the conceptualization of Balaev and aids in the present textual analysis of the selected novels. Their book titled *Bosnian Refugees in America: New Communities, New Cultures* (2006) is founded on the results of a research study based on the lives and circumstances borne by a sample of one hundred Bosnian families residing in an upstate New York community. It conveys the various ways including economically, mentally, and socio-culturally, Bosnian refugees have adapted to their new lifestyles. Additionally, it focuses on the impact of war on the Bosnian's. The dislocation and the cultural alienation which followed as a consequence can be deemed as similar to the present study. Even though the book's primary focus is on the Bosnian refugees, it can be seen as relevant for the analytical research of the present selected literary works as

the subject matter mostly revolves around the lives of refugees belonging to Palestine and Syria.

Coughlan and Manley proclaim that refugees exist in a social group that is often not considered in a positive capacity by society. "It is a stigmatized and negative identity"(22), which refugees want to discard as it is a traumatic reminder of the life that they have lost due to displacement, the new identity they have been forced to adopt, and how they had to leave their homes to seek refuge in unfamiliar territory. Forced dislocation shatters their connection to the cultural norms of their homeland and their identity goes through the process of reconstruction and reformulation, which Balaev also refers to in her theoretical conceptualizations. The model proposed by Coughlan and Manley allows a consideration of the lives of the people by keeping their cultural context in view, to comprehend how the stories of their trauma unfold. The writer refers to this model as a "temporal framework" as "major disruptions occur in the natural evolution of the ecosystem during times of war and displacement" and these traumatic experiences and their impacts are a point of discussion of a "refugee's migration path" (16-17).

By applying this framework to the selected fiction of the present research, it can be delineated as to how the distortion in the lives of these people varies at different junctures and their particular outcomes which in turn leads to a traumatic existence. These stages of migration are spread over four levels namely the prewar life, war experiences, displacement and transit, and lastly, resettlement. With the aid of these stages of migration, it can be observed how the characters of the selected texts adapt to their new lives as refugees, the violence they encounter, and the trauma that they go through due to the agony of displacement and travel. All these stages can be gauged as vital for understanding the various nuances of their life. Namely, the prewar life of a refugee draws attention to the inherent difference that exists in their current lives. The depiction of the past life of a refugee can be employed as a reference to evaluate and distinguish their present experience in the host country. Displacement and the war experiences stage covers the distortion and the lack of normalcy that afflicts them, leading to a sense of living in limbo till they resettle somewhere. The final stage of resettlement documents, stimulus of postmigratory trauma which encapsulates social alienation, isolation, language complications, etc. (14). Moreover, these stages can be conveniently sectioned into three phases that are the displacement era, the displacement

era, and the post displacement era to achieve a higher sense of clarity and comprehension (Isaken et al. 14).

Additionally, these stages of migratory experiences require the people involved to adapt to changing circumstances. This further supports the conceptual theorizations of Balaev as the following analysis investigates the trauma that they suffer, the pain of displacement, and the psychological tension affiliated with adjusting to a new environment in their lives. The trauma they face while trying to adopt a new lifestyle and integrating themselves into that setting, haunted by memories of the past. Moreover, an allusion to this model of study significantly adheres to Balaev's notion of discussing trauma from a pluralistic perspective as the present analysis of the two novels employs psychological, cultural, sociological aspects of interpretation which signifies a contemporary pluralistic study of trauma. The profound influence of the cultural and societal context which Balaev staunchly adheres to, in her examination of trauma corresponds to this framework of inquiry which also encapsulates a critical study of refugees keeping in mind the culture and society which is ripped from them. This is further supported by the employment of textual analysis as a research method as Belsey emphasizes its importance for cultural criticism.

5.1 *Salt Houses* and the Initial Era of Displacement

The current examination of the selected literary narratives traces the lives of the characters from the perspective of Balaev's concept of the role of place in the study of trauma. This offers a textual investigation that attempts to magnify the importance of the place of traumatic experiences to situate it in the locus of the natural landscape and within a larger cultural and social contextual domain. Place, in short, plays a pivotal role in identifying trauma and its value for the characters involved (Balaev 54). Beginning from *Salt Houses* (2017), the magnitude of place as a source of Salma's trauma, the matriarch of the Yacoub family, is important to consider, to comprehend how the initial generations dealt with the loss and pain-induced on them. Jaffa, her homeland, is the place that granted her protection and comfort as observed from the text, "Salma missed her home with a tenacity that never abated" (6). This place becomes a symbol of unimaginable horrors as the invasion of Israeli's intensifies. The trauma Salma endures during those dark days can be evidenced by her relationship with her eldest daughter Widad. The character of Widad as well as Hussam, her husband symbolizes Salma's connection to the war experiences and the subsequent displacement

and post-displacement trauma of both Hussam's painful death and Widad's hasty wedding as they both can be considered as anchors to her past. The line "Salma feels a familiar ache at the thought of her older daughter" (4) is significant on two levels. Salma is not only traumatized due to the separation from her daughter after her marriage, but it also feels due to the painful decision of separating herself from her daughter and sending her to Nablus to keep her, "far from this blazing country split in two" (4-5). Moreover, Salma steadfastly refuses to burden her daughter with the trauma that she carries. She does not realize that their lives were embroiled forever in this mire of torment. It can also be analyzed that by sending her daughter away she also wanted to drive away from the pain of losing her previous home.

Widad, Salma's eldest daughter is the one who cares for Alia during the time of terror before they decided to leave Jaffa. To console a young Alia, she made a game of the bombing and gunfire in which she would "raise her eyebrows in mock amusement, feigning delight at the muffled explosions outside" (4) as evidenced from the text. Salma herself terms her as a "resourceful" (4) girl. The use of this term is significant as it highlights the inherent difference between Salma and Widad which is visible from the textual evidence presented above as well. Widad transforms due to the trauma she experiences as she gains a creative capability to cope whereas, Salma on the other hand, pushes away the traumatic experiences she suffers from, to numb herself to the pain through assurances. A similar traumatic incident evokes different responses from Salma and Widad as seen from textual instances.

Additional differences in their responses to trauma can be highlighted from the fact that Salma lies to Alia, the protagonist. During the cup reading ritual at her marriage, she does not tell her the whole truth of the rootlessness that she has viewed in her cup. She only informs her parts of the truth, which is a shield she uses more for her false peace of mind than Alia's. In doing so, Salma even transgresses from the pact that all cup readers are bound by honor to share everything that they see during their readings. In short, to avoid further trauma and pain Salma taints the sanctity of the cultural traditions of the country she holds so close to her heart highlighting her ineffectual attempt to avoid the presence of trauma. Salma is connected to the places of her traumatic experiences through her flesh and blood: her children.

Salma's new house in Nablus can also be regarded as a dominant place of trauma for her. The house is a symbol of her post-displacement phase in Nablus, where

she and her family fled to, as Jaffa became occupied. Salma uses the term “house” (10) for the house in Nablus and “home” (1) for the villa they had in Jaffa. This pointed use of contrasting terms to indicate a place where she lives indicates the fact that for Salma, the house in Nablus is still new to her, a place where she has not completely resettled despite living there for the past fifteen years. She is unable to psychologically move on from the trauma of losing her Jaffa home to accept her new abode. The house in Nablus signifies an unfamiliar place. It was previously another family's home who also left in haste to Jordan from the fear of war. Salma refuses to change the general setting of the place as she keeps the rooms exactly for the purpose they were used by the previous owner as she feels a sense of alienation from this new house and does not accept it as her permanent residence. Symbolically, this can be taken as her innermost desire to go back to her own home in Jaffa.

The garden of the Nablus house, as seen from the text is completely altered by Salma. The following lines from the text "the garden is beautiful. If the house remains haunted, old ownership hanging over it, the garden is completely hers. The former occupants had tiled over the land, turning it into a marbled courtyard" (12), foregrounds the way Salma changed after going through the trauma of losing her home. She removes all the tiles and works with a great amount of zeal to grow something in the soil. This can be interpreted as her staunch desire to put down her roots, her culture, herself, and her family in the soil. The land, the nature, the flowers, and the vegetables she grows connects her to her life before the war, to the lush and green Palestine where she lived among the orange groves. She wanted to establish an anchorage for herself but the predictions she sees in Alia's cup herald the omnipotent presence of trauma and turmoil which never debilitates. Correspondingly, the garden can also be explored as a site of self-deception where Salma attempts to forget her traumatic past and plants new roots. It is a place where she reorients her perception of self and the world as she moves away from her memories of Jaffa and at the same time, ventures to make new connections to her present reality.

Furthermore, in both selected novels, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the writers focus to portray the journey of middle-class families to convey a depiction of trauma which moves away from the suffocating conditions of refugee camps and instead, draws attention to a different and profoundly significant perspective. As Salma points out in *Salt Houses* (2017) that “Widad and Alia and Mustafa, they

might have known gunfire and war, but they were protected from it with the armor of wealth” (11). These lines from the text can be analyzed as laying the foundation as they highlight that even though Salma and her family had no dearth of money and material goods that carried them far from the experience of war, they still underwent significant trauma which had a direct effect on their psyche. Another important textual evidence of Salma’s psychological state can be gleaned from the fact that Salma feels an aversion and unfamiliarity as she drives past the refugee camps which are present in the outskirts of Nablus. The lines “Salma still holds her breath, her childhood defense against bad luck, when she has to drive past them” (11), are significant as they enlighten that even though Salma and her family are refugees sharing the same trauma of losing their homeland just as the people living in the tiny tents, she still feels alienated and isolated from them. The “armor of wealth” (11) that she points to, is responsible for creating a gulf between them. She is drawn to these people and at the same time feels haunted by them. By focusing on middle-class refugees, Hala Alyan, the author of the text, offers a fresh perspective of analyzing trauma.

5.2 Traumatic Wounds Incurred in Kuwait

After the events of the Six-Day War in 1967, Alia, the youngest daughter of Salma is displaced to Kuwait, which can be seen as a place of her deepest trauma and despair. For Alia, the time she spends in Kuwait is a constant reminder of the death of Mustafa, her beloved brother, and companion. Kuwait is a place of chaos and uncertainty for Alia where she is unable to settle herself and put down any concrete roots. Her intense aversion to Kuwait stems from her traumatic loss and compels her to make the decision of leaving Kuwait and settle in Amman with her mother and extended family. Her idea is rejected by Atef, her husband, who after returning from his capture by Israeli forces is psychologically damaged and wants to start fresh in Kuwait, signifying how a singular incident of trauma evokes different responses from different characters. Concurrent to this, in the novel *Ceremony* (1977), the writer Leslie Marmon Silko details the life of a mixed-race American Indian, Tayo's traumatic experiences of war, and the resulting changes that his identity sustains. There are multifarious incidents that scar him psychologically as well as physically, including the death of his uncle and cousin, his combat encounters, and the racism that he endures due to his ethnicity. Tayo's life is consumed by the haunting dreams and voices that ghost his waking and sleeping moments by eliciting memories that he desperately wants to escape (26). Both

Atef and Tayo, are terrified by the memories that stigmatize their life regarding their past experiences of trauma. Tayo is appalled by his memories of war which consistently burden him psychologically. But his memories of the war are intricately bound to the memories of his uncle and cousin. These memories are interconnected to each other as they are the source of extreme trauma to him. Atef faces a similar situation evidenced from the text as he is constantly reminded of his time in captivity by the Israeli soldiers and Mustafa's death. These memories are linked to his past, specifically the time when Mustafa implored him to leave before the soldiers came for them. Atef is unable to recall one memory without the other, adding to his excruciating sense of loss.

Furthermore, coming back to Alia, besides the psychological damage that wreaks on her mind due to Kuwait, this place can also be construed as a symbol of Alia's physical trauma. Desert-like Kuwait is in direct contrast to her beloved Nablus, from its landscape as well as the weather, where it is cool and fresh, with the sloping hills and afternoons of drinking mint-tea and coffee. Several times through the course of her narrative Alia refers to her deep-seated hatred for Kuwait, for its prolonged summers and its deadly heat. The sky which she refers to as "relentlessly blue" (48) bearing down on her, without any trace of a cloud, can be interpreted as the impossibility of any respite from her trauma and instead points to her being physically trapped in the place of her anguish. Her bitterness can be observed from the lines in the text,

"Alia registered shock before heat. It was dazzling. She hadn't known the sun could blaze with such violence, the air could be so blistering that even inhaling seemed an Olympian task. So absolute was the heat that, in mere seconds, she couldn't recall a time without it. She was unable to find relief anywhere" (51).

The water with which she bathes, is always too hot and she even once says to Atef, her husband, that "everything smells of boiled meat" (53). These textual instances can be seen significantly exhibiting the acute physical trauma that Alia associates with Kuwait.

Moreover, the absolute heat of Kuwait implies the existence of an absolute trauma in Alia's life. She blames her difficulty in breathing to Kuwait, another source of her physical trauma as breathing is something that comes naturally to people but for her breathing in Kuwait is akin to something impossible as she says "...how breathing had been like drinking steam...the unremitting dampness of her skin, the loamy odor

everywhere” (76). This complication in breathing that Alia suffers from also signifies the sheer physical intrusiveness and oppressiveness of trauma in her life. With every painful breath that she takes, she is incessantly assaulted by the trauma of losing Mustafa her brother, her home, her memories, of her entire life before the war, what she possessed with pride and peace of mind that has now dissipated. This invasiveness of Kuwait’s merciless weather is a testimony of an ultimate truth that forcefully reminds her that she lives and he is dead. This is vividly expressed through the lines “She will watch the world tumble into yet another year. Without him” (66).

Additionally, the marital relationship of Alia and Atef suffers profoundly due to the traumatic experiences that Atef endures after his arrest and the death of Mustafa. Mustafa can be evidenced as a binding force that previously fused them but with his death, they both drift apart. Alia is unable to comprehend the unfamiliar man whom she knew as her husband. All her certainty about Atef "...has scattered like dandelion seeds beneath a child's breath ..." (50). This exposes how traumatic experiences like war influence the relationship of families. Atef is drastically altered by his brutal experiences of torture and confinement whose effects are textually indicated physically through his limp and numb condition of walking like a sleep-walker and sitting endlessly in front of the television. The effect of trauma on Atef’s psychological condition can be garnered from his frantic plea to permanently resettle in Kuwait as opposed to Alia’s wishes.

Another seed of Alia’s trauma relating to Kuwait can be understood as her pregnancy. The cause of her mental trauma related to the pregnancy can be interpreted as the dire implications that it carries for Alia. During her time in Kuwait, following Mustafa’s death and the occupation of her home Nablus, the initial period can be analyzed as the interim period which she is forced to spend here. She not only goes through the loss of Nablus but her home there as well which shatters her. She wants to end this period of psychological uncertainty and restlessness by going to Amman. Furthermore, the onset of a pregnancy psychologically burdens her as it can be analyzed that Alia views this as something which seals her fate in Kuwait, resigned to live without her mother: the last connection to her home and Mustafa. In one scene Alia "... places both hands over her belly, her laughter tapering” (76). The use of the term tapering in the text suggests significantly the influence this pregnancy has on her mind, emotionally exhausting her to the point where her laughter gradually vanishes.

5.3 Traumatic Scarring of Souad due to Constant Displacement

Aside from Alia, another significant character, Souad, her youngest daughter, traumatic experiences can be associated with the places of her continual displacement. Souad leaves her home in Kuwait to go to Paris for a summer program but this excursion away from her home proves to be her last. Shortly after arriving, Iraq invades Kuwait and the Gulf War begins closing all doors to the country of her childhood. The pre-dislocation period that Souad spent in Kuwait haunts her as she struggles with her recent loss of home. She is displaced and isolated from her parents in Paris and suffers from the psychological trauma of deciding whether she should join her parents in Amman or get married to her friend Elie and stay in Paris. The first thing, foregrounded through Souad's narrative, is the loss of sleep caused by the trauma of the invasion. Sleep which is supposed to repair and revitalize the body has lost this purpose in Souad's life since the war in Kuwait. This line from the text "She wishes to sleep for hours, until it is midnight outside" (157), emphasizes her need to slip into oblivion and not think of her waking moments which have taken the shape of a nightmare. This can further imply that the war has robbed Souad of her natural right to rest and sleep, not just for the time being but for the rest of her life as well. Souad is destined to feel this perpetual restlessness instead of ever sleeping with ease and security.

Furthermore, out of all of Alia's children, Souad is the one who suffers from the trauma of rootlessness the most. Even though Alia and Atef are adamant about not letting Souad go to Paris for the summer program but she fights vehemently against them and gets them to agree to her wishes. The restlessness that Souad ceaselessly goes through, is illuminated from the lines "You're just jealous! Souad finally screamed one evening. Because you're stuck in your little life, you want everyone as miserable as you" (158). After the initial news of her parents leaving Kuwait after the invasion, her mother tries to talk to Souad again but she staunchly avoids this confrontation. This phone call can be considered important as it highlights the amount of traumatic disruption which it holds for Souad. The mental agony of Souad about losing her home is further incensed by her increasing dread of her mother's phone call which will, in turn, seal her fate as a rootless person. For Souad, her mother's phone call symbolizes the loss of her prior life in Kuwait and is a glaring reminder of her status as a displaced person who has to face the daunting task of transitioning into a new era of her life. Souad has now become a refugee again, as she now has not only lost Palestine, the

country which was snatched from her decades ago, now Kuwait as well. The phone call for Souad represents her profound helplessness and the feeling of suspension she now suffers from as she is tormented by the feeling of not belonging anywhere.

Additionally, Souad's acute reluctance of taking her mother's phone call stems from the fact that she does not want to transition into the way of life that Alia wants her to, which is shifting to Amman. Her fierce dread for this transitioning is not just the fear of starting life in a new place all over again but it can also be taken as Souad's reluctance to start a new life with the constant presence of her parents around her. This emphasizes Souad's mental turmoil as her parents, especially Alia, to whom Souad attaches most of her restlessness, symbolize for her the trauma of losing Kuwait. If she continues to live with them she will be caught in an endless loop of reliving the nightmare of the destruction of her childhood in Kuwait. She desires to free herself from all previous bonds to Kuwait and this fuels her need to marry Elie. As Souad says "And she feels not love but detachment, an odd calmness as she watches him, as if she is appraising a house she's not sure she wants to live in. I wouldn't have to leave" (175). These lines taken from the text, accurately reveal her state of mind as Elie is not someone whom she wants to marry out of love. For Souad, Elie represents an anchor to whom she can tether herself and stay in Paris, and not to go to Amman where she will only be tortured by the ashes of her past.

Souad's dread of going to Amman can also be understood as mirroring the trauma of her father Atef. Atef was unable to go to Amman after Mustafa's death even though Alia wanted to leave Kuwait and shift to Amman to be with her mother and her extended family. Atef cannot bear the idea of seeing the same people who would remind him of Mustafa and he would relive his death every single day. This trauma can be linked to Souad's character as well. Souad's psychological trauma caused due to the loss of the place of her birth can be highlighted through the object of her fear. Unlike her brother and sister or even the rest of the world at large, she is not terrified of anything concrete but her fears lay in the realm of the abstract. The line used to depict Souad's inner trauma is "Her fear had nothing to do with not being able to breathe, her mouth filled with water, with some enduring want" (164). The vivid imagery that resonates from this, stresses the yearning desire, the craving for stability and security which is wrenched from Souad, the assurance that she can somehow reclaim her earlier life. Instead, she is eternally sentenced to this feeling of psychological unrest and

agitation. This fear of Souad can also be as understood as something which spurs her decision to marry Elie.

The varying stages of dislocation that Souad goes through can be traced through her journey from Kuwait to Paris to Boston to finally Beirut. For Souad, Kuwait can be seen as symbolizing the era of pre-displacement where she spent her childhood with her parents and siblings, a place that provided her with a sense of security. A place where she wanted to find herself and belong to contain the feelings of restlessness that coursed through her even then. The period of her displacement and transit began with her move to Paris and then to Boston. Paris not only symbolizes Souad's initial place of dislocation but it is also where she became pregnant with her first child Manar and grasped the gravity of her mistakes. All her life, Souad suffers the trauma of unbelonging and alienation. She seems to never be able to escape this fate as can be viewed from the way she says "Paris had transformed for her after the wedding" (211). Similarly, the shroud of intriguing mystery that was draped around Elie is also ripped to shreds just as Souad's eyes open to Paris. She is unable to explain the source of her restless attitude to Elie which can be interpreted as her hunger which she feels about losing her home and family. Amid all this, she becomes pregnant which adds to her loneliness as she is so far away from her family. Elie and Paris both contribute to the unremitting trauma that Souad feels and this can be perceived as a testimony to why she develops no bond with own her baby nor feels any happiness which is understood from the evocative description of the author, "Soon, another winter came, her second in Paris, and she swelled with Manar" (212) and "Cradling the mound of her belly..." (213). Alyan's use of the terms swells as well as mound highlights the estrangement that she feels towards her child.

The second era of Souad's dislocation is her stay in Boston with Elie and her two children, Manar and Zain. In Boston, she lives in a superficially sheltered life and this illusion is shattered due to the traumatizing event of 9/11. The incident itself cannot be considered as the only source of her psychological trauma as she is incessantly haunted by the images of the buildings slumping to the ground and people plummeting to their deaths. Rather, the subsequent repercussions of this horrifying event also scar her mental state. Souad and her children both become victims of racial discrimination which is a source of further torment for her. Moreover, this not only traumatizes Souad but also instills fear in her heart which is highlighted through the memory she describes

of going to buy a pack of cigarettes and the clerk referring to her as a “terrorist” (210) and “bitch” (210). Even her children are bullied as they are called “raghead” (207). The trauma that Souad undergoes during her displacement period spurs her to move to Beirut. Beirut can be regarded as her post-dislocation place, which she refers to as someplace like home “...somewhere people look like us, talk like us...” (207). Thus, Beirut can be understood as a place where Souad can somehow heal the trauma raging inside of her. A place she feels as if she belongs in, which can be noticed from the way she feels while hearing the people talk in the café below her apartment as if she is also somewhere among them where her presence is not distasteful for anyone. As Balaev signifies in her conceptualizations, a place where she reformulates herself due to her continual experiences of trauma.

5.4 Linah’s Reconfiguration of Self in Beirut

Balaev regards place as “central to representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event” (161). Focusing on Balaev’s notions regarding the place of trauma, it can be observed that Linah, Alia’s granddaughter also presents a poignant perspective regarding the role of place of trauma, due to the diversity of her experiences and her responses to them. Her narrative can also be deemed acutely significant as it is the only one in the entire novel narrated from the perspective of a child. Her point of view focuses on how Beirut, previously the place of her childhood and innocent summer days is transformed into a place of pain and anguish for her. Through the character of Linah, Alyan focuses on the influence which traumatic events have on children. The bombing of the airport in Beirut by Israeli forces in July of 2006 serves as the brutal background of the summer holidays which Linah spends in Beirut. It can be considered, that Linah’s narrative is fraught with oscillating incidents as she urgently strives to make sense of the anarchy that is unleashed around her. While at the same she is trying to hold on to the life before such tumultuous incidents which are being mercilessly snatched from her.

From the beginning, Linah wants this summer to be special for her and her cousin Zain as she was hoping to enjoy herself to her fullest by going to the beach alone and playing games, and spending time with her family. Unfortunately, this innocent dream of Linah's is shattered. As now,

“The summer is just heat and mosquitoes and the bombings that sometimes make the windows shake. All the adults do is talk about evacuation and warships and explosions. They watch men yell on the television and shake their heads... and yelled at Linah and Zain whenever they went near a window” (227).

Summer for her was previously a symbol of carefree and nonchalant days that has now morphed into a traumatic nightmare for Linah. Moreover, after the psychologically brutal adventure with Zain, the imagery that Alyan uses to highlight Linah's mental state is hauntingly traumatic and illuminates the writing style of the author. It aptly captures the thought process of a child. This can be emphasized from the scenes in which while standing on the balcony of her apartment, Linah regards the bombs falling as if "fireworks in reverse" (249) and "The missiles roar white and dazzling, like comet tails" (248). Images of war are immediately juxtaposed with Linah's childhood memories at the carnival where she had gone with her whole family as well as Zain's. Such contrasting imagery of the place of her trauma, highlights Linah's transitioning into adulthood. By thinking of memories of her life before the war and her present reality, her oscillating behavior can be observed. Linah stands on the very cusp of making a fateful decision as on one hand she wants to maintain a grasp on her childhood, and on the other hand, her current trauma forbids her to do so.

Through Linah, the writer portrays the extent to which the presence of children goes unacknowledged not only physically as "they barely glance at them" (235), but the psychological damage that they incur is also overlooked. In this case, the escapade that Linah and Zain go on to get cigarettes proves to be a life-altering traumatic incident for them but the adults notice nothing amiss at all due to their distracted attitude. Moreover, they even fail to notice the absence of the children during the entire episode which could have proven fatal for the children as the whole city of Beirut was under siege. The use of such situations can be viewed as the author, Hala Alyan's way of stressing the burden which trauma carries for adults as well as the children who are often not considered in such chaotic circumstances and are, psychologically damaged as a result. The episode on which Linah's narrative hinges is her secret adventure. She convinces Zain to accompany her to the local supermarket to buy a pack of cigarettes which they intend to smoke secretly. Linah's depiction of this entire incident is greatly poignant as it is being communicated through the eyes of a child. This occurrence can be regarded as a symbol of their loss of innocence. Their experience begins on an

adventurous note as Linah and Zain exit the apartment building in the manner of spies, a child-like observation made by Linah excitedly. Through a haunting display of imagery which is illustrated by the writer "The air is queasy, a tar-like tension in the warm dusk. The few people that cross their path are men, scruffy-looking, as though coming from a day in a mine somewhere, their hair rumped, clothes dirty" (236). This shows the urgency at which the tables quickly turn for Linah as she is flung into a traumatic nightmare.

The climax of their adventure comes at Abu Rafi's from where they want to buy cigarettes as they encounter a maid who is unable to pay for the groceries that she wants to buy. The intense confrontation that ensues between the maid and Abu Rafi is witnessed by them and it roots Linah to the spot making it impossible for her to leave. Their adventure turned nightmarish ordeal, highlights the loss of their innocence. When the woman finally decides to leave with just some bread, her posture and coolness make Linah think along the following lines "This is who you are, she seems to be saying to the man, look at this wrinkled bill on the counter, my unwashed hair. For the rest of your life, you will remember this moment" (238). These lines can be interpreted as if the maid is sentencing Abu Rafi to this fate. It can also be seen as symbolizing the exact moment when Linah and Zain become aware of the harsh realities of life and the reformulation of their self occurs which is signified by Balaev happens as a result of trauma endured.

This raw experience imprints itself on Linah's mind as she has never before witnessed such atrocities. She is unable to forget what the woman looked like, her face, her hair, her expression "frantic, vehement" (237). Both the children can be observed as having been reformulated following this experience. This is further described through their gestures as when they return home "there is a funeral quality to their movement, like children playing children" (239). This traumatic sequence can be regarded as a poignant testimony of the psychological scars that Linah suffers. This is further suggested in the novel when later, her mother calls her "monkey" (243) and laughingly tries to cheer her up with the prospect of a pizza, it dawns on Linah with something akin to an epiphany "It is wrong, all of it" (243). The ordinariness of her previous life, even her own mother's endearments takes on an unfamiliar color for Linah as the traumatic experience she witnessed reconfigured her.

The maid whom Linah and Zain encounter at Abu Rafi's can also be regarded as a deeply powerful character who is penned in such impressionable detail, that she sears herself in Linah's memory. This nameless maid can be understood as a character who collectively encapsulates the trauma of all the domestic help in times of war. Through this woman, the severity of the situation is impressed upon the two children. The maids, the help who people employ for their ease, feature in the shadows of the whole text. The trauma that they suffer is emphasized through Linah and Zain. This maid who is abandoned by her employers in war-torn Beirut without food, electricity, and most importantly her passport through she could have returned home, is representative of a community of people who are often overlooked and whom Alyan brings into focus through Linah's narrative.

Moreover, when Abu Rafi refuses to sell the maid the food items that she wants to purchase at a lower price for fear that other domestic workers might flood his store the next day and rebukes her can be evidenced as a contrast to a time Linah remembers before the war when Abu Rafi slipped them sweets for free. Similarly, as a child, her mother used to play a game of dressing her up in her clothes and then surprising her father through her beautiful transformation (245). This pure childhood memory of Linah is marred by horror as her conception of the world undergoes a severe change. Her memory of the past is revised due to the traumatic experience of seeing the maid at Abu Rafi who is also observed as wearing a dress that does not fit her properly. As if she, like Linah, is also playing a game of dress-up. These circumstances illuminate the psychological damage that Linah undergoes as her innocent memories of the past are stained by the trauma of the present. Trauma can be seen altering Linah, as even if the war ends and she visits Abu Rafi's again she will always remember graphically, the psychological pain she endured at this place.

5.5 Nour's Pre-displacement Phase in *The Map of Salt and Stars*

The use of landscape imagery associated with a specific place to intensify the presence of traumatic experiences, can be traced from the very first line of the novel *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), "The island of Manhattan's got holes in it, and that's where Baba sleeps" (3). This resonates with "Landscape imagery provides an imagistic avenue to portray an extreme emotional state" (qtd.in Balaev 83). Balaev highlights that "the physical landscape is a referent for the individual's sense of self or identity", which is centralized to depict the internal conflict as "the individual attempts to understand,

incorporate, and explain the traumatic event" (161). This can be interpreted from Nour's perspective, as instead of saying that Nour's father was buried in New York, the writer employs such a vivid landscape image to emphasize the depth of the loss that Nour has incurred due to the passing of her father. Nour even signifies that there is a hole in her too (3). This can be deemed as further confirmation of her psychological anguish and the cursed connection she has to the place of her initial trauma. By using the word holes, Joukhadar illustrates the hollowness and emptiness left behind in a person when a significant part is torn from them due to pain and trauma. It can also denote the image of an abyss that has opened inside Nour's heart which she is unable to fill and which grows deeper due to the incessant presence of trauma in her life.

Additionally, Manhattan is a place for Nour where she was deeply anchored but after the death of her father she and her family are forced to leave for Syria. Due to the trauma, she suffers after the death of her father, the feelings of content and happiness are replaced with despair, adding to her mental anguish. She is forced to revise her previous conceptions as she intensely feels "the not-homeness of this city" and more significantly "How sometimes this city shakes and crumbles in the distance..." (21), pointing to the harsh reality of civil war looming in the horizon. Moreover, the use of landscape imagery prevails in Nour's delineation of Homs in Syria, which becomes another primordial place of her trauma. She and her family move here from Manhattan to their ancestral country to start anew but by utilizing words such as "hot" and "rainless" to depict the landscape of Homs, Joukhadar foreshadows the cessation of trials in their very homeland as well (5). Other vivid terms used in the text that closely relate to such an environment revolve around stickiness and sweat which Nour is constantly reminded of (6). This points towards the steady intrusiveness of the trauma in her life through the unrelenting quality of the weather of the particular landscape of Homs.

Moreover, to acquire a richer understanding of the loss of their home due to shelling, it is vital to consider the cultural context as proposed by Balaev, in which this traumatic incident takes place. Balaev highlights that discussion regarding the place of trauma in a cultural context opens new avenues of interpretation and meaning. This can be observed from Nour's experiences as well. From the very beginning, Nour's mother is seen preparing for a dinner which she is hosting for Abu Sayeed who is the adopted brother of Nour's father. By following the cultural tradition of Ramzan, Abu Sayeed

and Huda, Nour's eldest sister are both fasting (40). This family dinner is itself laced with underlying trauma as Abu Sayeed lost his son on this particular day and by losing his home on this day as well, it can be observed that he goes through a cycle of retraumatization.

Additionally, the socioeconomic persecution that is portrayed through the family of Nour after the death of her father, as well as the changing political situation of Syria, is coupled with a form of environmental trauma as they reside in a neighborhood in Homs which is increasingly affected by the omnipotent presence of war. This is shown through the numerous protests spreading like wildfire through the city (16). The crucial tensions in the novel not only revolve around the oppressive socioeconomic conditions but also the inherent powerlessness to return to the land of their previous generations due to its contaminated state. This can be illustrated from the destruction caused by the bombs which dismember not only their homes but themselves, as in the case of Huda, Nour's sister. She loses an arm as a result of the shrapnel left inside her, which is like a physical piece of trauma itself.

Furthermore, before the dinner, Nour's mother requests them to get some cumin from the market as it is finished. Cumin is a cultural spice that originated in Syria. The use of cumin in this specific scene cannot be disregarded as Balaev purports the significance of narrative strategies employed by writers to emphasize the traumatic experiences. The absence of cumin can be examined as the family moving away from their cultural practices. Even when Nour and her sisters bring a jar of cumin, her mother is too distracted to add it into the dish of Shifa she is making. Huda even remarks on the price of cumin increasing again, pointing to the economic insecurity discussed previously (20). The writer draws attention to the jar by the way it rattles, due to the bombing in the distance and when finally their house is hit by a shell, the smell of burnt cumin lingers in the atmosphere. All these textual instances can be regarded as the diverse ways in which Nour and her family undergo trauma within a cultural context as gradually their culture, their home, the two primary foundations of their lives are burnt and destroyed in ashes. The discord and disruption that threatens to erupt in the life of Nour and her family, can be seen as being foreshadowed by the booming that Nour constantly hears happening within the city of Homs, which she considers far from her home. She likens it to the sound of thunder which never really hits (6). This childish notion of Nour's psyche can be interpreted as her desperate desire to retain a sense of

normality in the abnormal circumstances of her life which terrorize her mental state so soon after the loss of her father.

Nour and her family's displacement period can be seen initiating from the time they are dislocated from their home in Syria. After the loss of their home due to the bombing, they are forced to travel to Damascus to get Huda surgical attention due to her arm being torn open by flying shrapnel (81). From here onwards their disruptive journey begins as they first travel to Jordan. Jordan can be discerned as the second place of trauma for Nour as two dominant traumatic incidents transpire in Jordan, Huda, her eldest sister's, near-rape experience and the death of Abu Sayeed which can be regarded as evidence of this. Huda's relationship with Nour can be described as a profoundly venerated relationship. Nour feels closest to Huda as compared to her other sister Zahra and this signals the traumatic devastation that she suffers when Huda is brutally assaulted by two teenage boys in Jordan which becomes one of the places involved in causing psychological and physical torment and suffering. Through the course of the narrative, Nour encounters various boys and varying comparisons can be drawn from her depiction of them. The first time she sees them is back at Homs, her lost home. She sees them and considers them as an angry crowd protesting loudly. In Jordan, she considers them as "...bored, like they're about to steal a couple of sodas from a minimart just because they can" (162). By likening them to such a mundane and petty thing, the writer communicates the gravity of the trauma both Nour and Huda endure.

The memory of this incident haunts Nour to such an extent, that afterward she is unremittingly reminded of it, and alludes to the inhumanity of the boys by referring to the fact that for them Huda did not signify as an individual. Rather she was just another soda can meant to be stolen (162). This highlights the barbarity which people have to suffer at times of war and also Joukhadar's portrayal of this incident from the eyes of Nour, a child, intensifies the traumatic incident. Even innocent beings such as children are subjected to it and it perpetually haunts them. Additional evidence of the above statement can be gleaned from the thoughts that race through Nour's mind such as "In some tiny corner of my brain, I know what this even though I don't have a word for it. I want to close my eyes. I want to throw up" (162). How Nour describes her intense horror, can be seen as a juxtaposition against her innocence and purity which is shaken to the core due to this incident. She even alludes to her father's death, as she indicates that she can smell sea salt and dust which elucidates memories of winter in

Manhattan, pointing to the season her father died. The memory of her father at this particular moment serves as a stark reminder of the beloved person she has already lost and is now on the verge of losing another. Even when Nour struggles to fight back her hands fail her as she shakes terribly and clumsily (163), which can be seen as a physical testimony of how trauma maims and handicaps people.

Moreover, the graphic imagery which the author makes use of such as “The left side of her face is stung with a long a welt, and blood and hair are clumped under her fingernails” (164), reflects the desperateness that trauma has induced in Huda, as she animalistically claws and bites for her survival. Huda’s “flowered hijab” (18), which features throughout the novel is also mentioned in this powerful scene as Nour sobs into it, denoting that Huda is a symbol of fortification and from whom she draws her strength. She uses her hijab as a pillow and even when the shell fell on their house, Nour despairingly searches for the flowered pattern under the rubble as a sign of Huda’s survival. Nour is reminded of Rawiya, the girl from her father’s story, during this ruthless encounter as she chants to herself that she can never be like Rawiya. This suggests the psychological anguish that Nour faces, as for her, Rawiya can be perceived as an idealistic heroine who she aspires to be, a legacy of her late father which she cannot be due to the overwhelming trauma in her life. Altogether, even though this incident is not described in more length by the writer, it can be conferred as one of the most horrific depictions of trauma associated with Jordan which not only scars Huda but also impacts Nour. The rape does not take place just like the painting of Tarquin and Lucretia, as described by Belsey but fixates the trauma in the mind of Nour and Huda.

During the phase of their displacement, on their way to the American embassy Nour and her family are compelled to travel to Jordan, with a mother Umm Yousaf, and her child, Rahila. Nour's interaction with Rahila can also be regarded significant as it is another source of horror and trauma for her. The writer calls attention to Rahila's smell which she points out in three different ways as Nour can tell that she has not washed in a while, the smell of her diaper is overpowering as well as the "chicken-soup smell of arm pits" (105). This as well as various other incidents in the novel demonstrate the physical extent to which trauma invades and evokes the senses of the people undergoing such experiences. The foul odor associated with the brutal circumstances taking place

can be linked to the abhorrent smelling atmosphere of miasma overwhelming the senses.

Moreover, Rahila is described as wearing "fuzzy earmuffs" (105), which Nour is puzzled by as the weather is oppressively hot. The earmuffs hide Rahila's ear where,

"There's only pulpy meat where her ear should be, a red mass wrapped in bandages. Her ear has been torn right off, the delicate bone and earlobe ripped from the side of her skull. Tiny nubs of flesh and cartilage poke through the rubbery mass like strawberry Jell-O capped by a layer of pus. The ring of singed hair extends in a scar down her neck, jagged and pink" (106).

The writer's use of earmuffs is expressly poignant as beneath such an ordinary object, hides extreme grotesque reality. As opposed to protecting her from the cold, Rahila's earmuffs serve the function of hiding the damage coerced on her from the destructive force of her brutal experiences. The contrasting images of a child attached to such gruesomeness can be seen as the two being juxtaposed together to heighten the display of physical trauma endured even by children during such circumstances. As Nour comments that "All of us have been soaked in bad memories" (120), as the burnt odor clings to them physically through their clothes and hair. It has become a perpetual part of their existence. Nour observes that the shell which destroyed their house not only left shrapnel in them, thinking of Huda but "The shell must have left sulfur and smoke in us..." (120), which further insinuates that they are all immersed in the miasma of such painful memories forever changing them.

Furthermore, the expulsion of culture from their lives can also be discerned from Nour's meeting with an old man while traveling to Jordan. This interaction can be recognized as deeply significant due to the man being a "hakawati" (107). The man is also forced to leave his home due to his place of livelihood, the café where he told stories, being shelled. The old man can be taken as a symbol of the past culture. As a hakawati, he bloomed among his people as he used to weave "tales of jinn and the deeds of princes" (108). After the border gates at Jordan refuse to let him through along with the others, they have to leave him and this action can be interpreted as similar to leaving their cultural traditions behind. Moreover, after hearing the old man has to remain behind, Nour questions this situation which both her sisters avoid answering. This is stated through the actions of the two sisters: Huda's shoe slips off and she stumbles

along in a hurry to get away and Zahra looks away while reaching in her pocket for her non-existent phone which is crushed in the rubble at the house. Joukhadar's use of such mundane details can be examined as to her way of describing the effect of trauma on the unconscious mind of the various characters. They attempt to avoid further pain but they are incapable of doing so as it has seeped so acutely in their lives. It demonstrates that their pain is unbearable so they are unable to cope and bear the anguish of other people in their lives.

Additionally, before leaving Syria forever Nour remarks that "The pavement on the other side has a shimmering quality to it, like it's shifting in front of me, as though the world outside of Syria is made of fear, wonder and light" (109). This not only illuminates the uncertainty and the disruption that Nour believes is in her future but also signifies the changing perception of the places beyond Syria that Nour is forced to journey to, because of her traumatic experiences. When Nour and her family arrive in Jordan, Umm Yousaf offers them her house to stay where she lives with Rahila, her son Yusuf and her mother. They arrive in time for the iftar meal (122). The scene of both iftars, the one in the beginning which they prepare for Abu Sayeed and the present can be contrasted with each other. Both reflect the cultural context and the overpowering presence of trauma. Jordan as a place of trauma for Nour and her family can be investigated by scrutinizing both these textual instances. In the beginning, the characters felt underlying anxiety as they were unable to comprehend the severity of their circumstances. In this scene, however, the initial trauma of losing both their home and country has come to pass, and they all sit together with Umm Yousaf and her family depicting the scars forced upon them by the trauma they have suffered, changing them psychologically and mentally. As Nour's mother points out that, "we don't have to sleep on the street" (123), as Umm Yousaf offers them her home. This emphasizes the fear of homelessness and unbelonging which has suddenly become a permanent part of their lives. The permanency of a sheltered home, which they previously relied upon has been ripped from them in a single day.

5.6 Reorientation of the Characters in Libya

Aside from Jordan, Nour and her family are displaced to Libya, another place of crucial importance in regards to trauma portrayed in the text. It is deeply related to the pain and loss of the family. Libya or as Nour recognizes it from its ancient name "Barneek" (208), can be appreciated as a metaphorical mirror, which is held up for the

characters as an act of self-examination. Their notion about themselves and the world transforms due to the death of Abu Sayeed, which induces multiple responses of trauma from the various characters as opposed to a universal reaction to trauma just as proposed by Balaev. Their sojourn in Libya and the decisions they make can be interpreted as their varying responses to the trauma they have incurred. This is highlighted in the text as Umm Yousaf and her family respond to the traumatic death of Abu Sayeed by refusing to travel further by ferry as Abu Sayeed had drowned in front of them. On the other hand, Nour's mother is opposed to traveling by road as she considers the practical implications and claims the border will close by road (222). Both women can be seen as fiercely wanting to protect their families, and are forced by the trauma they have endured to make difficult decisions that psychologically transform them.

During this phase of displacement, Nour is separated from her mother and Huda, as the latter needs medical attention due to her arm getting infected from the shrapnel. Nour and Zahra are forced to take a turbulent ride on a ferry to get to Algeria and their experience is fraught with the traumatic fear and distress of being discovered by the men on board the ferry. The text further examines the plight of the two sisters Zahra and Nour, by employing seascape imagery which serves the purpose to convey the loss that they have undergone. It also functions to portray Nour's changing perception of self in the context of the natural environment incorporated. The use of traumatic imagery to describe the rampant destruction in the particular sequence in which, the ferry is torpedoed and Zahra's and Nour's swim to the shore is strikingly portrayed by Joukhadar particularly the lines "...the sea stings the inside of my nostrils and burns all the way down my throat" (265). The accepted interpretation of water is usually associated with calmness and a cleansing effect on people. The text offers a variant interpretation that it is far from being soothing to Nour. For Nour, the water can be interpreted as a living, breathing monster which can be seen from "The water's hand strikes my back, harder than granite" (265) as well as it "...smacks my face" (265). For Nour, water specifies as a harsh instructor, altering her through its harshness.

5.7 Post-displacement in Ceuta

Before reaching Ceuta, Nour faces harrowing traumatic experiences which gravely impact her and her family. After crossing the border of Algeria illegally, she and her sister Zahra, are forced to cross a fiery desert with no hope of respite. After the desert, they find themselves in Morocco, and from here they have to travel in a fruit

container to reach Ceuta. The fruit truck in which they sneak in is refrigerated and is excessively cold which indicates the fact that first, they suffered from the scorching landscape of the desert and now the cold. This establishes how the characters face varying degrees of traumatic phenomenon through the course of the literary text. The imagery employed by Joukhadar is inherently traumatic as she writes that “The vents might as well be pumping out frozen knives” (308). Moreover, Nour compares the overwhelming darkness inside the truck to her closet in New York where she used to play games of hide and seek. Such an innocent memory of Nour stands out in stark contrast and undergoes transformation due to the horrific conditions that presently she and Zahra are trapped in. It can be seen that previously, the pleasurable memories of her game are contrasted to hiding in tense consciousness of exposure. Moreover, Nour's comparison of the two glaringly different situations can be argued as a sign of her splitting consciousness as she oscillates between the memories of her wholesome past and her terrifying present.

Similarly, the use of trauma imagery in this certain sequence of events such as “The dark is a frozen vice that crushes the delicate bones in my wrists and my ankles until I think they will snap” (308), is highly suggestive. This as well as the line of text referred to above can be examined from the perspective that insinuates the cold as a form of invasive force disrupting her physically and mentally. Joukhadar's use of words such as “frozen vice” and “delicate bones” (308) evoke images of Nour previously untouched by the harsh realities of life and now trauma has invaded her in every sense to damage and destroy her. By referring to the cold as a frozen vice it can point to the possibility of an interpretation of considering trauma as a villainess being that wants to ruin the innocence of Nour by physically freezing her and psychologically numbing her. After getting discovered in the fruit truck, Nour's post-displacement period can be seen as initiating as both Zahra and Nour are sent to a refugee camp at the outskirts of Ceuta. In a few brief lines, the author describes the crushing reality of refugees by proclaiming how the camp “curves away from the houses” (310), surrounded by “a high fence of wire mesh” (311) where there are “dozens of boxy concrete bunkhouses” (311). Another point of importance that purports itself is the presence of clothes. As Nour notices that “Laundry dries everywhere, on fences and bushes and benches” (311). The use of clothes as a symbol is employed to display the powerlessness caused by trauma. This camp, which is supposed to be a sanctuary for the refugees, is only superficial in

its function as it can be considered just like a prison for the people. The prior description of the way to the camp mentioned above, as well as this imagery, demonstrates that this camp cannot be regarded as a stable haven for the people. Rather, it can be analyzed as a limbo, where the refugees live untethered and unattached to any anchor. Just like the laundry sprawling everywhere they are traumatically dislocated from their homes.

Moreover, Ceuta can be regarded as the locus of Nour's post-displacement phase. It can also be considered as a place where the reformulation of her identity comes to a culmination. Nour's reorientation of self from the trauma she has encountered throughout her journey, including the death of her father which happened before her displacement, relies upon the integration of the memories of her ordeal through a physical reunion to a culturally symbolic landscape. Ceuta fulfills this condition, as it can be interpreted as not just any inconsequential space. Rather, this place is profoundly influential as this is where her uncle, the last connection to her father resides. Her uncle Mam'un not only provides them with a place to live but he also offers refuge to other people besides them, to complete their documentation to settle in Ceuta. This particular place presents a further meaningful psychological connection for Nour as the house in which Uncle Mam'un now lives, used to be her family's home before they left for Manhattan. Nour's father may have lived in Manhattan but his heart yearned for his home. Thus, this place reminds Nour of her memories with her father and also serves to heal her wounds. This place significantly shapes the value of her experiences which she endured to get here as they reconfigured her perception of self. Nour and her family immerse themselves in this familiar natural landscape which she connects to on a contextual level as it offers cultural stories of past suffering and trauma.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFERENCE OF TRAUMA ACROSS GENERATIONS

Intergenerational trauma or transgenerational trauma can be considered as a trauma that is cumulative in nature and influences both physically and psychologically, future generations due to its increasing proliferation. Even though the descendants who do not suffer trauma directly, still display the symptoms of trauma which can include depression, low self-esteem, anger, anxiety, etc. J. Brooks Bouson, in her book, establishes the idea, that traumatic phenomenon is a transmissible and invariable experience to claim that the "collective memory" of slavery is "intergenerationally transmitted" particularly and solely to African Americans (3-5). Bouson argues that African Americans are plagued by the traumatic memories of their ancestors due to the institution of slavery from the previous times.

Moreover, Bouson's notion of intergenerational trauma proclaims the universality of response to traumatic events as well as an essentialist notion of identity which demonstrates that an individual is characterized by the historical experience of that specific race, religion, or gender. Thus, Bouson offers an essentialist view of examining trauma which adheres rigidly to the African American's. In contrast, the present analysis delineates trauma that reverberates through the generations of Arabic people as they attempt to navigate their lives amidst the pain and suffering they have to endure due to being indefinitely displaced. It is an examination of trauma in the lives of these characters who are completely different from African American's as Bouson limits her ideas only to their race, but are nevertheless similar due to the contagious nature of their trauma which is passed from one generation to the next.

The intergenerational or transgenerational notion of trauma propounds a rhetorically engaging model with which to investigate trauma along with the use of the social contextual factors in the two selected novels. The texts can be interpreted as incessant, timeless, and infectious incidents that reverberate across generations as outlined by Balaev (151), and such a perspective is supported by the approach of studying intergenerational trauma established by Bina Nir in an article titled *Transgenerational Transmission of Holocaust Trauma And Its Expressions in*

Literature (2018), posits several approaches for studying intergenerational trauma. Her approaches mostly deal with the study of the Holocaust but the points discussed in her approaches possess a certain universal perspective, rendering them applicable to most trauma situations for instance the Nakba and Naksa of Palestine sketched in the novel. One of the approaches by Nir which distinctly draws attention specifically concerning *Salt Houses* (2017), focuses on the bonds and communication existing between the members of the family as the pivotal aspects through which the transference of trauma takes place (4). The symptoms which elaborate the presence of trauma through the communication among the family members are integrated with the below exploration of the text.

6.1 Trauma's Depiction through the First Generation in *Salt Houses*

Corresponding to the above notion, *Salt Houses* (2017), pursues four generations of the Yacoub family beginning in chronological order with the first generation whose only living member is Salma, the matriarch of the family. The trauma that Salma endures as the victim of the loss of her home and country at the hands of the Israeli assault on Palestine is deeply palpable through her narrative. Salma is not only the sole character featuring in the novel that heralds from the first generation of Yacoub refugees, in fact, *Salt Houses* (2017), initiates with her narrative of her youngest daughter Alia's wedding. Right from the start, the presence of trauma is discernible even at a social event such as a wedding ceremony. Trauma magnifies itself through the cultural tradition of the cup-reading ritual which is shown as a common occurrence at a wedding in Palestinian families. Such a tradition previously bonded the varying generations of a family but now it can be seen that Alyan sets the stage of the novel through such traumatic foreboding in the context of a cultural tradition that will now taint the future generations with trauma. The instant Salma reads the dregs at the end of the coffee cup of her daughter, she decides to lie about her predictions. She lies to cover the constant dislocation and uprootedness that shocks her from the remnants left behind after drinking the coffee. Such turmoil and travel not only reside in the fate of Alia but also in her descendants as well.

Additionally, the coffee cups and the tray in which they are served feature as a powerful symbol in the novel they remind Salma of bygone days an era before the war. It reminds Salma of the trauma of leaving her home and her prized possessions in the wake of war.

“But it was gone, the old tray and coffee set...Salma cried out when she saw the tray, pointed it out to the vendor. He refused to sell it without the coffee set and so she'd taken it all, walking home with the large, newspaper-swathed bundle. It was her first satisfaction in Nablus” (1).

The lines indicate her desire to resettle in Nablus her new house after she lost everything in Jaffa. Another thing that has been illuminated is that the tray of the coffee set has not lost its original shine over time even though the cups have become shabbier. The tray can be regarded as a symbol of their culture that remains untarnished, the only possession that Salma and her family could take away with them with the fall of Palestine when they left all material possessions behind. Whereas the cups that have worn out with the years designate the people of Palestine, the victims who were forced out of their homes and are living with the burden of trauma in their hearts. The writer uses the following words to describe the cups "monumental little things, heavy and hollow at once, with the contradictory weight of eggs" (8-9). Such a profound description of the cups is significant regarding the present analysis as cups can be seen as a symbol for the people of Palestine as they are indeed carrying the oppressive load of trauma in their hearts which weighs them down mentally and emotionally and which they transmit to future generations. This trauma does not make them physically powerful as superficially they are still human beings who have the same frailties and weaknesses.

Thus, the tradition of cup-reading is passed down from one generation to the next and previously existed as one of the patterns of the lives of Palestinian families. Now, this cultural norm can be analyzed as a transgenerational transmission of trauma that previously may have existed just as a ritual to be done at marriages but now holds a more profound significance. This notion stems from the fact that with the advent of displacement, amid crisis and trauma, it is only the abstract traditional practices that they can carry to an unfamiliar place to adjust to somewhere new. For Salma the trauma of losing her home and husband never fully abates and now even the security of her practices betray her as the future she sees for Alia is the forbearer of a new chain of traumatic events.

Furthermore, Salma organizes Alia's wedding on a grand scale which can be analyzed how earnestly she wants to avoid passing her trauma to Alia. In addition to this, such an overt action of Salma can also be interpreted by what Bina Nir in her

approach to study intergenerational trauma through the medium of familial relationships regards as “guilt and material compensation” (5). This symptom of transgenerational trauma posits that due to the guilt experienced by survivors over the demise of their close ones, they are unable to develop familial bonds after the experience of trauma consequentially leading to providing for the children to such an extent that it becomes a kind of compensation for the lack of emotional support (5). This can be examined from the description of the wedding venue is nothing short of extravagant with “tea-light candles set in arcs around the plates” (2) and as Salma says that this effect will look akin to a constellation when lights will be dimmed. This is in contrast to the wedding ceremony of Salma’s eldest daughter Widad’s as she was wed plainly in a mosque “the smell of incense potent around them” (2) following the death of her father and Salma’s husband Hussam. As Salma was unable to compensate Widad due to her trauma, her guilt pushes her to do everything lavishly at Alia’s wedding.

The use of olfactory imagery as indicated above highlights the effect of trauma on the senses of the victim. In this case, Salma wants to rid herself of all the potent smells that she relates to Widad's wedding which take her back to a time of chaos and disorder and so with Alia's wedding she wants her senses to be in a state of relaxation. Widad's wedding can be analyzed in the light of the initial post-displacement phase in Nablus when the wounds of the pre-war stage that is the memories of Jaffa were lurking visibly in the background. With Alia's wedding, Salma is of the assumption that she has put her traumatic experiences behind her but this is not the case as this pain is a part of her existence and catches up to her through the ritual of cup reading when Salma's cultural practice betrays her by becoming the direct cause of her trauma.

In addition, Salma's husband Hussam also belongs to the first generation of the Yacoub family. He does not appear physically in the novel and can only be observed through Salma's memory of him. For Salma, Hussam can be interpreted as both a link to the life before the war as well as a traumatic connection to the war experiences and the time of displacement that followed as a result of it. Salma was born into poverty and after her marriage to the affluent Hussam, she became the mistress of a villa and fragrant orange groves. Their life of ease and comfort is plucked from them leading to a series of never-ending pain and suffering. First Salma loses her home to the war and then her husband also becomes a victim of this suffering and dies of lung cancer.

“More than once he cried out into the night, “They took my home, they took my lungs. Kill me, kill me.” Hassam fiercely believed his illness was tied to the occupation of Jaffa, the city with the peach-colored house they’d left behind” (3).

The above lines are significant as they highlight again the significance of olfactory senses when it comes to the connection between trauma and memory. The burning air from Jaffa as the tanks rolled in as well as the smell of burnt oranges as they are razed to the ground signifies the memory of that primary place of trauma that haunted Hussam and manifested itself in the form of his lung cancer which refused to let him breathe with ease away from his home and homeland. In this way, Salma's last link to her past is traumatically wrenched away from her with Hussam's death.

Various analogies can be drawn between *Salt Houses* (2017) and Lan Cao's novel *Monkey Bridge* (1970). The text focuses on the relationship between a mother and a daughter, Thanh, and Mai who reach the United States as refugees after the war in Vietnam. Thanh details an idealized account of her life in Vietnam whereas Mai struggles to trace the truth of her mother's past. The novel not only describes the traumatic experiences of their past but also emphasizes how their relationship is affected and the varying responses they elicit as a result. According to the story of the particular betel nut myth, the soul of an individual is unable to survive outside the homeland of the spirits of ancestors. A person is bound to the duty of protection of these spirits of the past and also for the ancestors to attain perpetual life and regeneration (84). The myth further details the story of two brothers and a woman who leaves and perish next to a river. This resonates with Salma's husband Hussam who leaves the home of his ancestors, his beloved Palestine, and dies from lung cancer. Symbolically Hussam's cancer can be regarded as a curse that condemns him for leaving his ancestral land. The memories of the rice fields that Thanh is haunted by can be examined as mirroring the orange groves that Salma is reminded of back at her home in Palestine. Thanh states that the war that took place in the rice fields is traumatically similar to the burnt oranges and trees by the Israeli forces. The connection of the characters to their homeland through the use of such landscape imagery illuminates the existence of identity that is embedded in such a blessed place, which after the brutality of trauma is damaged and disrupted.

Additionally, Mustafa, Salma's son, and one of the second generational members of this family through whom a prominent display of the burden of trauma and how it is passed down from one generation to the next can be explored. The effect of trauma on Mustafa can be seen both physically and mentally. His relationship to the two people in his life who dominate his thoughts provides evidence of this. Mustafa's response to Imam Bakri, the young and charismatic Imam of his mosque, and Ayah, the girl whom he loves, the refugee who lives in a hut on the outskirts of Nablus highlight the extent of his psychological trauma. For Mustafa the principal place of his trauma can be regarded as Palestine whose loss is transmitted to him from his dead father and forefathers and by being closer to Imam Bakri and Ayah, Mustafa feels closer to Palestine. The trauma of his losing his home is especially palpable in the character of Mustafa as he desperately wants to do whatever he can to get back to his homeland and this trauma has affected him to such an extent that for him both Ayah and Imam Bakri are symbols of Palestine.

For Mustafa, Imam Bakri can be regarded as a potent symbol of Palestine, one of the sources of his trauma. For him, the Imam is someone whom he aspires to become. He is someone who can somehow lead him to his forgotten legacy which is his birthright. The mosque and Imam Bakri both portray trauma in a cultural context. Mustafa feels like he is accomplishing something concrete due to the communal sense of brotherhood that he experiences in the mosque with his Shabab. These lines can be seen as a testimony of his psyche

“...he thrills at thought of the gathering...the kinship he feels in the mosque; the churning of something ancestral and looming... He leaves the meetings feeling moored, centered, as though someone has finally found the matchstick of his faith and torched fire to it” (30-31).

Mustafa's identity is a product of reformulation due to the combined trauma of the death of his father and loss of homeland which can be examined as manifesting itself as the lack of faith that he has in his religion, a crucial part of his culture. The absence of his homeland, his roots have steered him away from his culture, his religion as he does not feel any bond to his religion but feels an affiliation towards the mosque only for the sense of brotherhood that it gives him. The line "Mustafa's spine tingles at only one word: Palestine" (31) is profound as it signifies Palestine as not just his home, but also the center of his existence, his religion, his only faith. He wants to fill the abyss left

behind by the death of his father by taking back his home aptly representing the uninterrupted flow of transgenerational trauma.

Additionally, Mustafa's narrative begins with his practice for the speech that Imam Bakri wants him to give at the mosque to rouse the people of Nablus, to awaken them to the need to strive to get back to their homeland –Palestine. At the end of his narrative, Mustafa begins his speech in the mosque but the actual speech that he gives, the actual incident is not portrayed in the novel. This is deeply significant as it mirrors another event which is that of Alia's wedding which is not shown in the novel. Only the events leading up to both occasions are highlighted in detail which illuminates the non-linearity of the plot echoing the distortion caused by trauma. The characters exist as if they are all living at the edge of a precipice. They are unaware where their life will take them next which is there is a sense of disruption not only in their lives due to the lack of home but also a general instability in the plot as well.

Furthermore, another factor that Bina Nir proclaims is the "high degree of codependence in the child-parent relationship" (5) which reflects the fact that parents deal with issues of separation in the past due to traumatic experiences. This hampers their ability to separate from their children and depend on them and the children on the other hand also feel this intense reliance, which prevents them from developing individual lives. This can be recognized from several instances of the novel. After Mustafa's death, Alia is left traumatically shattered but going to Amman every summer to her mother Salma's house consoles her physically and mentally as can be evidenced from her carefree and relaxed attitude as well type of clothing she wears during her visits. Salma can thus be regarded as Alia's anchor, the roots which she relies upon to keep her grounded to her past self and her life before the invasion. But after Salma's death, Alia becomes traumatically adrift. Salma's death for Alia can be assumed as signifying the burden that comes upon Alia as the first generation of the Yacoub family has now died and the trauma of being the oldest surviving member of the family is now transferred to her and Atef. The burden of such trauma results in Alia's anxiety and anxiousness. It can be contemplated that her fear of losing people and homes to death and destruction has tormented her psychologically to such lengths that she has become angry about her life and the people around her. She shields herself from her traumatic nightmares behind a cloak of bitterness. This can be observed from the fight that Alia

has with Souad her youngest daughter over her careless attitude to not use any plate while eating sandwiches covered in sugar which in turn attract swarms of ants.

6.2 Transmission of Trauma in the Second Generation of *Salt Houses*

Another significant character of the second generation who displays transgenerational trauma can be observed as Mustafa. He can be regarded as the recipient of intergenerational trauma as he can be seen as the representative of a lost generation of Arab men who are perpetually traumatized due to a lack of their home country. Mustafa's character is shaped due to his trauma as he thinks of himself as a crusader, an avenger who is destined to do something epic for the sake of his lost county. His memories of his life before the war are not depicted but the childhood memories of post-displacement and resettlement in Nablus have been mentioned which highlight the demise of his father. Mustafa hates his father, a thing which he has only confessed to Alia which signifies not only the trauma he felt at the death of his father but can also be analyzed as the betrayal that he feels after his death. The betrayal that not only Mustafa identifies with but this is symbolic of how the entire younger generation feels about their previous generation. The trauma they suffer from at the inherent betrayal of having fled from their rightful homeland during the invasion. Additionally, his trauma has imparted a sense of delusion in his mind that through the use of his oratory skills he can somehow unite the lost generation of Palestine and lead them to a glorious victory.

Mustafa's conversation with his mosque's Shabab Omar is important as it signifies their rootless condition. The Israeli forces not only took their homes when they invaded but also their right to progress in their lives. As Omar poignantly displays his frustration that the building they are constructing

“Starts and stops. Bastards are stingy with permits...And if not that, we get hassled on zoning. If we're not getting fucked from one side, it's coming from the other...light them and smoke, facing the valley. For a couple of moments they are silent, each lost in thought” (25).

This highlights a sense of mental anguish of the younger generation and their existence in a state of limbo which starts but continuously comes to a halt as they are reminded of the lack of control that they possess on their own lives. This emotional trauma shapes the identity of Mustafa and all his mosque's Shabab. Moreover, The writer's use of the

word "Shabab" (25) is also meaningful in the novel as it not only means the youth or the young men of Palestine but it also signifies something of far greater magnitude than this young generation of Palestine are wholly ignorant of the reality of fighting in a war that their older generation had witnessed. They are naïve of the atrocities of war and only gather in the mosque to give speeches and have discussions completely unaware of what happens in a war. The mosque and the communal sense of brotherhood that Mustafa, Atef, and the other Shabab feel provides a cultural context for their experience of trauma. Though they have not gone through the brutality of war the mental torment of not only losing their home but their father figures due to the occupation by Israeli forces has traumatized them.

Another aspect of Mustafa's personality that has been shaped by his experiences of trauma is his reluctance to marry and start a family of his own. Even after the drastic step that his mother takes of leaving the house due to his hesitancy to marry, he remains in an unmarriageable state. Mustafa's disinclination towards settling down can indicate his emotional state which yearns only for Palestine. The call of home hinders him from following his mother's wishes and putting his roots down in Nablus which for him can be taken as a symbol of a fleeting sojourn. Whereas another characteristic of Mustafa's trauma that highlights his delusional tendency is the language that he employs. The language he uses while he practices his speech "They want us to yield" (26) and similarly the language that he utilizes to think and speak about is quite suggestive in nature. He uses deeply romanticized language to display his admiration for Imam Bakri as well as his need to prove himself as the savior of his homeland.

The absence of a father figure in his life has led to Mustafa having a desperate need to be recognized by a similar substitute which in this case proves to be Imam Bakri. Furthermore, the turmoil and trauma that Mustafa goes through psychologically, manifests itself in a physical form through the disarray of his house. After Salma's departure, he rarely cleans, and as can be observed from the lines

“Mustafa walks around the kitchen scratching his head. He does his familiar dance, opening the drawers, eyeing the detritus in the refrigerator... But the truth is the disarray doesn't bother him; most of the time he barely sees the mess. Only after speaking with his mother does the unkempt state of the house come into relief” (27- 28).

These lines are indicative of the chaos and disruption that is inherently rampant in his mind. They can be recognized as the physical symbols of Mustafa's rootlessness. As a consequence of trauma, disorderliness pervades his personality.

Intergenerational trauma which passes from the second to the third generation can be aptly considered from the tactile tension that exists between Alia and her youngest daughter Souad. As Atef, Alias's husband once remarks to Widad, "I've never seen two people more alike" (132), which suggests that Alia transferred the turmoil raging within her to Souad which has subsequently led them to become mirror images of each other. Moreover, Alia's trauma is further incensed as Souad does not only mirror her, but she is also similar to Mustafa, Alia's beloved brother both in her mannerisms and physical features. She sees "Mustafa in the twitch of her mouth, the lips downward when she is impatient or afraid" (144), and as Salma remarks when Souad curses at news report "Allah have mercy, she has your brother's blood in her" (145). Thus, Souad can be regarded as a physical manifestation of Alia's traumatic past which continues to haunt her in the present as well due to its overwhelming presence in her daughter.

Moreover, Souad's and Alia's relationship indicates the presence of another symptom of transgenerational trauma which Nir proclaims is "parental over-protectiveness" (5), according to which the children of survivors flourish in such an environment that incorporates unrestrained anxiety and rigidity regarding exposure to the external environment (5). This can be investigated from a heated confrontation that occurs between Alia and Souad can also be perceived as brutally traumatizing Alia. When Souad returns late at night Alia begins to shout and yell at her due to her suffocating over protectiveness for her child. Moreover, it also gives her a sense of relief. This also signals towards the similarity in both Alia and Mustafa mentioned previously as both rage and fight to convey their emotions. Mustafa used to love when he could fight passionately to prove his point and Alia is like him in this manner as well further displaying the staunch connection between the two. It is the way their personalities have been shaped due to the trauma they have suffered throughout their lives.

In addition, this fight between Alia and Souad is significant as Alia is stripped from the shelter of her last defense causing her psychological agony. Souad sees through her mother as she hurls the very last thing Alia expected anyone to know is how unhappy she is in Kuwait and Souad says

“Oh, oh, this again? It’s like living in a theater. You want everyone to be unhappy so we can be like one of your American films... Souad’s disappointment with the family has been a keen, a living thing... Souad smiles like someone about to sweep a poker table... been pining over Amman like some jilted lover” (143).

For Alia, Amman can be gauged as a substitute for Nablus and Mustafa, a secret which she guards closely to her heart, and Souad knowing this precious secret induces a pressuring sense of depression and anxiety within her. Furthermore, Alia sees the ghost of Mustafa lurking in Souad not only physically but psychologically as well which instigates the gulf of trauma and restlessness which exists between the mother and daughter. Alia is unable to come to terms with the loss of her home and the deaths of her mother and brother which wound her psychologically. Moreover, the emotional damage that Alia goes through following the hasty marriages of her children can be considered from a cultural context. During the initial time of invasion following Souad's whirlwind marriage to Elie, she heartily disapproves of Souad's choices. Subsequently, Souad's status as a divorcee is also a point of contention between them

Additional minute details illustrated by the author can be examined as indications of the transference of past upheavals. The avid use of sugar by all four generations of the Yacoub family can be recognized as a small but vivid detail that Alyan employs to connect the members of the family irrevocably. Even though sugar mostly symbolizes positivity and optimism, but in this novel, it does not herald anything peaceful. In the first generation, Salma used to drown her Kanafeh in syrup and so does her daughter Alia which is further brought to the limelight when the relatives at her wedding tease her to not take so much and leave some for the rest. In the second generation, the titular point of contention between Alia and Souad is the topic of bread that she eats covered in sugar which attracts swarms of ants due to her carelessness. Finally, in the fourth generation, Manar, Souad's daughter, eats cereal which she "smothers in sugar" (203). In every scene that Alyan uses sugar signals towards the strife and trauma that plagues the lives of the characters. The sweetness of sugar is vividly juxtaposed to psychological tension that rules the lives of the characters. Manar supremely blames her mother for the divorce of her parents and the ensuing chaos of dislocation that erupts in their lives as a cause of this.

The strain that perpetually exists in the life of Souad as it is passed on from Alia due to their psychological unrest, prevents them from having a healthy relationship. The history of such traumatic turbulence in their lives can be traced back to Salma who begins this chain of cataclysmic events by lying about what she sees in Alia's future. Even the language that Alyan associates with sugar, utilizing words such as drown, smother, spill, etc. is in deep opposition to the positivity and happiness that sugar exudes and is tainted by the overwhelming aura of trauma that pervades the life of the characters. For the characters, sugar does not provide them with a sense of happiness but it, in turn, functions as a potent and dangerous drug which "smothers" (203) the harsh realities of their lives. Thus the juxtaposition which the writer creates through her use of a positive symbol such as sugar in the above circumstances results in foregrounding the accursed presence of intergenerational trauma and tension in the lives of the members of the Yacoub to an even more glaring extent.

Souad's narrative, Alia and Atef's daughter, marking the third generation of the Yacoub family continues well into her adulthood, even after the birth of her two children-Manar and Zain. Elie and Souad go through a divorce after some years of marriage. Souad continuously shifts with her family first from Paris, then to Boston, and finally coming to Beirut. The initial trauma that Souad goes through, as a consequence of the complete erasure of her life before the war, affects her in a magnitude of ways. Souad's relationship with Elie as well as her children is strained and disrupted due to the turmoil that roils her mind and affects her psychologically. Souad's immediate family can be recognized as an exact mirror image of her own dysfunctional family underscoring the transmission of trauma to another generation of the Yacoub family. Even when Souad finally comes to Beirut, Alia comes to aid them in settling. The gap of strife that exists between them further illustrates the trauma that has been passed from one generation to another. It is accentuated through their interactions with each other.

Through the course of Souad's narrative, Alia appears as someone in the background but still a prominent influence in the life of her daughter. All such instances suggest the extent to which past traumatic experiences indubitably prick and harass the present mental state of Alia leading to her caustic attitude towards her family. On the other hand, the scene in which Souad sits down wearily in the store with Alia while unpacking boxes and Alia tries to console her to a certain degree is significant in

analyzing their relationship as it emphasizes the helplessness that both suffer from in the face of adversity. The trauma which both of them have undergone in their lives has made it arduous to the point of impossible to have conventional relations between the mother and daughter. This is illustrated through Souad's own words "With her mother, Souad is her prickliest self, a cat stroked the wrong way" (161).

Similarly, when they both do try to overcome their prickliness for each other, it seems strained and detached in nature as is evocatively described by the writer as

"Souad thinks of her mother's absence at her wedding...The air is stiff between them. Alia looks intently at her lap...They'll get used to it...Souad feels tears spring. Without looking up, her mother reaches out, fast as a rattlesnake, and takes her hand. She squeezes it, once, hard" (222).

Alyan likens this ordinary act of affection to that of a rattlesnake. Snakes are typically associated with fertility, immortality, transformation, etc. But in Alyan's case, she makes use of the particular simile of a rattlesnake which is venomous and not just any snake, to emphasize the magnitude to which Alia has been afflicted by the disruption and distortion she has experienced in her life. Her actions are governed by urgency and potency that is consequential of the trauma she has suffered as she varies to show even her daughter some heartfelt affection. This can also be understood as Alia's desire to shield herself from trauma by keeping her family members isolated from her.

Moreover, Alia's favorite child Karam is a cause of pain for her as he also marries against her wishes to a girl Alia does not approve of. Looking at it from a cultural context, for Alia, the marriages of her children can be understood as alliances that scatter and displace her children all over the globe. The children, after their marriages, become detached and distanced from their parents. Marriage for Alia can be seen as a symbol of union and happiness but this cultural norm becomes a point of traumatic disruption for her. The marriages of her children can be considered in profound contrast to Alia's marriage ceremony which was a momentous and joyous occasion for her. On the other hand, she completely refuses to attend the marriage ceremony of Souad "saying she wouldn't show her face to such an abomination" (180). A further source of Alia's trauma can be regarded as her children. The estrangement that she feels towards them can be seen through "how infrequently her other two children visit, the rare times she gets to see her grandchildren" (181). Thus, the

difference in the lifestyle of her children from her own, isolated from their roots and cultural practices, and the subsequent gulf this creates can be recognized as one of the major sources of Alia's psychological distress.

6.3 Transgenerational Trauma in *The Map of Salt and Stars*

In *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), the yearning which Nour's father endured for a greater part of his life, can be observed as most poignantly transferred to his youngest daughter Nour. The memories from her early childhood till his death are Nour's tortuous companion while she weaves her way through a tumultuous journey across different places in the novel. These memories can be seen as a form of representation of intergenerational trauma. Nour's memories of her father can often be observed overlapping each other, as the present swiftly shifts into the past and vice versa representing the distortion caused by her traumatic remembrances. In one of the scenes as Nour and her family wait for the ferry to arrive and take them across the sea to Algeria, as they are waiting by the docks, Nour is flooded by the memories of her father. Once her father took her to the carousel and as she did not want to go home due to the recent demise of her grandmother, she hides in the trees. Her father is unable to find her and weeps in despair. Whereas Nour kept hidden as

“And then there was a moment I remembered where I was, only I couldn't see my hands or my feet. I had become the dark and the bushes, and my body had evaporated. The me I knew had disappeared. And for a minute, I liked it” (237).

Previously the trauma of losing her compelled her to think that she would like to disappear too as this can be analyzed as her desire to shun the memories of her grandmother. She did not want to remain in the present reality as it becomes unbearable for her. Whereas now, this particular memory corresponds to their current situation as they hide from the ferrymen to sneak onboard the ship. Recalling this memory elicits a changed response in Nour which can be discovered from the fact that she has transformed due to the trauma she has encountered. Previously she wanted to hide from her pain but now "...watching the sun...back to the harbor...waiting to see my arms and legs" (237). Now, she comprehends that she can never conceal herself from her traumatic experiences, thus transforming her past conceptions. The death of Nour's father elicits varying responses in her and both of her sisters. Huda draws towards

religion which can be envisaged as her attempt to locate a sense of security in the chaos of trauma. Zahra on the other hand drifts away from her family which can be observed

“And whose room was Baba in every night...telling stories? Would you trade that for a bracelet...Then she rubs the side of her head...These past few months, I haven't really been there. Baba's dying . . . it was like I crossed a bridge and couldn't come back” (218).

Nour, herself shoulders the burden of his death in different ways. She is unable to talk in the beginning. Then she harbors the fear that she has forgotten his voice. Trauma as a speechless horror in correspondence to the traditional model is not practiced as all these instances indicate the multiplicity of responses to trauma displayed by the characters in the text.

The depiction of transgenerational trauma through the novel can be considered by the author's choice to portray two narratives dealing with essentially parallel themes to each other. Both Nour and Rawiya lose their fathers at an early stage in life. Both leave their homes and embark on a bildungsroman journey across the world. Even physically they are similar to each other as both cut their hair to be mistaken for boys on their perilous journey. Such features intertwine the two stories with one another and the cause behind the writer's choice to present these narratives through such an approach can be analyzed as Joukhadar's need to convey trauma passing transgenerationally across so many centuries. The trauma of constant movement from one place to another and both Nour's and Rawiya's perpetual search for a home, the trope of the journey is transgenerational which has not undergone any change and is the same as it was in the past. Through the course of Rawiya's tale, Joukhadar utilizes the ancient names for the places that she goes through whereas Nour's reference guides us through their present names. This can also be considered significant as even though the names of the places may have changed and the places themselves have altered the trauma of movement is still engraved in them. The trauma of having your home ripped from both of them indicates that this is transmitted across centuries and is ingrained in these places. This is highlighted through the fact that the experiences Nour suffers are similar to Rawiya of the past as trauma transverses across generations.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The present study focuses on explicating the research questions purported in the introductory chapter. An analysis of two fictional narratives titled, *Salt Houses* (2017) by Hala Alyan and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar is done through the conceptual lens of Michelle Balaev which highlights trauma through a pluralistic paradigm in order to accomplish a diverse understanding of trauma.

7.1 Findings of the Study

Balaev's stance regarding the pluralistic paradigm is employed in this research, to accomplish an understanding of the trauma endured by the characters. The present study utilizes novels that are quite contemporary and aid in changing the perspective and the stereotypes generally associated with people relating to these particular regions of the world. Moreover, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is an increasingly growing crisis along with the proceeding occupation of Syria, so the present research of literary fiction pertaining to these regions allows for an understanding of the traumatic existence of the Arabic people. The present research focuses on an exploration of trauma that coheres to a pluralistic paradigm and Balaev's foundation of inquiry rests on such an approach where she repudiates the essentialist discussion relating to trauma studies and instead focuses on a variety of literary features. This establishes a framework emphasizing the importance of place, protagonist, and language as seen through the textual analysis of the present study. The intrigue associated with the traditional model of studying trauma can be continued if it also recognizes the diversity of contextual characteristics involved in traumatic experiences. The current research illuminates the effectiveness of studying neurobiological theories together within a framework that is also inclusive of social psychological theories. To fulfill this purpose the present study investigates the selected texts through the concepts addressed by Balaev as well as the notion of intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Furthermore, the analysis distinctively focuses on the aspect of place while studying trauma in the two literary texts. The present study perceives place as a significant feature concerning the characters. The research demonstrates how traumatic experiences disrupt attachments between individual self and others by analyzing the

place of trauma. Place as a symbol signifies the value of trauma as it encompasses the physical location, cultural and social contextual elements, and the history of the traumatic incident for the characters involved. The textual analysis shows the multitudinous ways in which trauma displaces and alters the characters like Nour and her family from *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), who traverses several countries after a bomb destroys their home and are forced to endure the weight of the trauma which eventually transforms them through the course of their travels. The two novels chosen for the study represent varying traumatic incidents and the place of such experiences is interpreted as a dominant aspect of the analysis. The research depicts the way the characters experience trauma regarding a particular place as well as how the cultural, social and physical conditions influence them. Moreover, the present study also brings the execution of the protagonist to the forefront, who possesses an omnipotent appearance as someone shouldering the narration of both collective and individual traumatic experiences as is the case with Nour and Alia from the two selected texts.

The present research observes that in *Salt Houses* (2017) several members of the Yacoub family suffer from the effects of the trauma passed down from the older to the younger generation through the conceptual approach of transgenerational trauma. The thesis portrays the transmission of trauma passing unremittingly from predecessors to descendants. The textual analysis yields from the exposition that Salma, the matriarch of the family observes the future of her daughter, Alia, on the eve of her wedding in the remnants of her coffee cup. There she sees signs of displacement and dislocation which span the course of the entire text as she and her children and grandchildren are doomed to this unsettled life. Numerous major traumatic incidents come to pass through the course of numerous generations through the Six-Day War of 1967, invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, 9/11 throughout which the family suffers and scatters continuously marking this novel as a traumatic saga of an unfortunate family. This research presents a study of the multiple generations of this family as they endure repeated, contagious and timeless trauma as a result of all the places they are displaced to throughout their lives.

Whereas, *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), features a protagonist Nour, who is compelled to shun her content life when she arrives in Syria with her mother and sisters after the demise of her beloved father. The study puts forward the protagonist as an individual that suffers and undertakes a transformative journey literally and

metaphorically. The textual analysis of Nour shows how the impact of the Syrian Civil war alters her identity, relationship with her family and community. The country Nour's mother knew by her heart and soul is going through dire transformations involving the emergence of the Syrian Civil war, and it is not long before protests and shelling terrorize their quiet Homs neighborhood. When a shell destroys Nour's house and almost takes her life, she and her family are forced to choose between a catch -22; which is either stay and risk more violence or flee as refugees across seven countries of the Middle East and North Africa away from the trauma which haunts their daily existence in search of security and normality. The yearning for Syria that Nour's father was inflicted with is passed down most prominently to his daughter Nour which is discussed in the analysis. Moreover, towards the conclusion of Nour's journey she reaches her uncle in Ceuta where she can start a new life transformed from her journey pointing towards the possibility of healing for her and her family after the trauma they suffer.

The textual interpretation conducted also shows the characters in the two novels as witnesses to the shattering influence of trauma in a domesticized setting. Both Alyan and Joukhadar have analyzed as the chroniclers of the nightmarish experiences that their respective people were and are still forced to endure, reducing them to an unsettled and traumatized existence that reconfigures their personality. Even though the writers are Palestinian-American and Syrian-American, having mostly lived in America their whole lives, their novels are a testimony of the trauma of their respective homelands. This is observed from the minute and simple details, the use of certain words from their respective languages, the respectful understanding of the traditions renders the depiction of trauma uniquely authentic. It is observed in the analysis that from the very beginning of *Salt Houses* (2017), Salma the matriarch, attempts to eschew the traumatic destiny of her family when she deceives herself as well as her favorite daughter Alia. By falsifying her narrative through the sacred and traditional act of cup reading which Salma holds in high esteem as cup readers must never lie about what they see, highlights a sense of foreboding about the forthcoming trauma in their lives. The analysis of a disruptive series of episodes as the characters are relentlessly shuffled from one place to another is portrayed. In the introductory chapter, trauma is alluded to as an abnormal type of wound. It can be referred to here as the investigation of both the texts portrays the narratives as wounds that proclaim the harsh intensity of the trauma through a

fictional medium. The destruction of Palestine and Syria caused by war and occupation vividly features in the works which result in burdening the habitual lives of the people.

7.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

In conclusion, due to the limitations of time and the field of inquiry, it is impervious to grasp an understanding of any topic from all known perspectives. This study is also delimited to a particular aspect and other researchable venues of investigation for academic scholars can include the study of these particular texts from a formalist point of study. The literary form, as well as the use of literary devices in the novels employed for this study, can be expanded upon as both the writers have a lyrical approach to writing which is at times poetic in nature. Moreover, the formalist approach may be considered a preliminary form of study but coupling it with concurrent texts such as *Salt Houses* (2017) and *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018) can aid in sparking an interest in the area of Arabic literature.

Secondly, another interpretative approach that presents possibilities for further study is the feminist field of exploration. Both novels predominantly deal with the lives of female characters and the male characters are mostly overshadowed by them. The current study deals with this aspect about how it signifies the trauma suffered by the characters, but a more meticulous examination can be conducted engaging with certain queries such as the kind of roles that women have, the stereotypical portrayal of females, the treatment of the author towards both men and women featuring in the novels, etc. Such prospects of research can open areas for further opportunities of inquiry for academic scholars.

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