FLÂNEUSE-ING: A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC STUDY OF KALIFEH'S *MY FIRST AND ONLY LOVE* AND MADHOUN'S *FRACTURED DESTINIES*

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JUNE 2024

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BS English, Fatima Jinnah Women University, 2019

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF

Masters of Philosophy

In

English Literature

To

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, RAWALPINDI

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

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Thesis Title: Flâneuse-ing: A Psychogeographic Study of Kalifeh's *My First And Only Love* and Madhoun's *Fractured Destinies*

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Master of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

Title: Flâneuse-ing: A Psychogeographic Study of Kalifeh's *My First and Only Love* and Madhoun's *Fractured Destinies*

The present study investigates the act of flânerie executed by females in Madhoun and Kalifeh's selected Palestinian novels. Drawing upon Elkin's concept of female walking from *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*, the research explores how female protagonists traverse urban landscapes, mountainous terrains, and cities, portraying haptic and intimate urban experiences. The study has employed McKee's textual analysis model to investigate the intricate navigation of societal complexities, shedding light on issues such as violence against women, struggles with identity, marginalization, war, resistance, and the quest for belonging. It reveals how the social issues embedded in the urban space and the psychogeographic impacts of space influence the psyche of the flâneuse. Amidst the chaos and turmoil depicted in selected Palestinian novels, the portrayal of love emerges as a pivotal theme explored by the flâneuses. The contemporary flâneuse, with acute attention to detail, vividly captures the essence of the cityscape, immortalizing its nuances and myriad experiences within her narratives. The study emphasizes that the act of flânerie transcends age or profession, showcasing how women from various walks of life engage in the exploration of urban environments, enriching the literary landscape with their perspectives and insights.

Keywords: *Flânerie, Flâneur, Flâneuse, Psychogeography, Flâneuse-rie/Flâneuse-ing, Female walking, Urban geography*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After thanking God Almighty, I extend my sincere appreciation to Ms. Rabia Shamim, my dedicated supervisor, for her unwavering support, timely feedback, and continuous encouragement during the course of my MPhil research. Her wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm have been instrumental in shaping my thesis and fostering my intellectual growth.

I am also thankful to my cousin and mentor, Harmain Rukh, whose invaluable guidance and support have played a significant role in the development and realization of my research goals. Furthermore, I am thankful to the English Department at NUML for providing a conducive academic environment that allowed me the opportunity to pursue my research endeavors with creativity and diligence.

Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to my parents, siblings, and friends for their unwavering patience, encouragement, and support throughout this academic endeavor. Their belief in my abilities and steadfast encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration. Without their support this achievement would not have been possible.

Thank you all.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, especially my father, whose unwavering support has been my guiding light. In particular, I honor the memory of my Amma jee and Nanu Jee (my maternal grandparents), who would have undoubtedly been proud to see me reach this milestone.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Flânerie, the act of leisurely walking through the city with the intent to capture its essence in writing, holds a distinct place in literary discourse, particularly in City Literature studies. It serves as a framework to explore the "city and its landscapes," encompassing buildings, parks, and architecture, offering an artistic portrayal (Ortega 3). These wanderers have traversed cities for ages, evading the constraints of time and obligations, freely navigating "urban territory", enticed by hidden alleys or bustling marketplaces (Tester 92).

In the 19th century, the term "wanderer" evolved into the "Flâneur" embodying privilege and leisure, representing the artist immersed in fleeting city experiences. This figure became a chronicler and a mirror reflecting a new era, observing the expansion of modernity within cityscapes (Benjamin 171).

Baudelaire defines the flâneur as "a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes" (Baudelaire 21), emphasizing the pleasure dérived from the act of flânerie. For the flâneur, it is not about hurriedly moving from one place to another but rather about wandering leisurely and experiencing the hidden corners and nuances of the cityscape. The persistent image of the flâneur continued through literary and creative movements in the 20th century, from Eliot's and Pound's urban poetry to Benjamin's modernist essays and Joyce's exploration of Dublin in Ulysses. However, it predominantly excluded women, as evident in the works of Debord and Acconci, who delved into psychogeography and urban influence (Boutin 127). Despite sharing the same streets, women lacked equal anonymity or freedom to wander cities aimlessly, often due to familial responsibilities or safety concerns.

Elkin, a novelist and literary researcher, was intrigued by this contrast and questioned the traditional view of the male flâneur. Her book *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* challenges the legacy of male artists and writers who chronicled urban wanderings. Instead, Elkin highlights female artists and writers like Woolf, Sand, Calle, and Gellhorn, offering a fresh perspective on women's engagement with the cityscape. Through historical study, literary analysis, and personal

reflections, Elkin redefines flânerie not to “fit a masculine concept” but to celebrate and reclaim the city for its female wanderers (18).

My study aims to explore urban landscapes through the perspective of Flânerie, delving into the intimate experiences encountered by the flâneuse during her explorations. It seeks to examine the psychogeographic impact on the flâneuse as she navigates the intricacies of the cityscape.

1.1 Thesis Statement

The literature produced about flânerie during the early nineteenth to twentieth century shows that the presence of females has been either neglected or restricted to certain roles in the streets which resulted in the curtailment of their freedom to explore the city. Therefore, the research intends to investigate the presence of females as flâneuse in the contemporary world. It will also explore geography’s impacts on females, using Elkin’s concept of ‘Flâneuse and Psychogeography’, in Madhoun and Kalifeh’s selected contemporary Palestinian fiction. The purpose is to bring diversity into the existing concept of flâneuse, while also highlighting the similarities or differences between the contemporary flâneuse and the Baudelarian notion of flânerie.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the psychogeographic impacts of flânerie on the flâneuse
2. To explore the concept of flâneuse as the painter of contemporary world in the selected texts
3. To highlight the similarities or differences of the contemporary flâneuse from the traditional flâneuse

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the psychogeographic impacts of flânerie on the flâneuses of selected texts?
- How have the chosen female characters executed the act of flânerie in the selected texts?

- In what ways is the contemporary Flâneuse similar or distinct from the Baudelarian notion of Flâneuse?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The concept of flânerie has captured a very distinctive position in literature, especially in the study of City literature, as it provides the readers with comprehensive approach to study the city life and its landscapes by painting an artistic picture of it. Most of the literature produced on the notion of flânerie has stereotypically categorized it as a male activity by denying the existence of women as *flâneuse*. During the 18th and 19th century, "woman's freedom was restricted to certain stereotypical roles" and it was seen in a negative light by the patriarchal society if a woman was "strolling alone" in the streets (Malone 80). Malone further explains that, unlike the male, she was not called flâneur/ flâneuse, rather she was labeled as a "prostitute" (81).

Though the existence of flâneuse has been accepted in modern times, however, we still find certain restrictions placed on her while trying to carry out the act of flânerie. This study is significant as it focuses on highlighting the fact that women do not need to be confined to certain roles or backgrounds to perform the act of flânerie in this contemporary world, adding this notion that women from any background can be a *flâneuse*. This research also provides a new perspective for studying the role of a flâneuse thus giving a bit of diversity. To achieve this goal, the study has selected two contemporary Palestinian writers. One specific text of both the writers has been selected due to their relevance to the topic.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to two contemporary Palestinian texts, namely *Fractured Destinies* by Madhoun and *My First and Only Love* by Khalifeh. The study is also restricted to the psychogeographic study of flânerie carried out by the flâneuse. It will not deal with the aspect of physical spaces in psychogeography rather the focus is on the psychological spaces it constructs. The study is further delimited to the female characters of the selected novels and focuses on the ways the writers, Madhoun and Khalifeh have depicted the characters as flâneuses of the contemporary world.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study comprises of the following chapters:

- Chapter one is the introduction. It discusses the thesis statement, along with the research objectives and questions. It also highlights the significance of the study and its delimitations.
- Chapter two is the review of related literature. It provides a detailed introduction to *flânerie, flâneuse and psychogeography*. It also gives an overview of the past studies done on the selected novels.
- Chapter three presents the research methodology adopted for the study. It focuses on the model for the qualitative textual analysis of the text under study.
- Chapter four and five deals with the textual analysis of *Fractured Destinies* and *My First and Only Love*. Textual evidence is filtered out from the selected text to explore the act of flânerie carried out by the selected female protagonists.
- Chapter six is the conclusion. It states the findings after carrying out the textual analysis of the selected texts. The study's focus is to analyze the act of flânerie executed by a flâneuse in the contemporary Palestinian literature. The study analyzes the selected texts to see how the females carried the act of flânerie.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The study of the city is carried out through the act of flânerie and psychogeography, which has evolved with the passage of time and attempts have been made to redefine it. Therefore, this chapter highlights the works that have been done in this field and traces the evolution of this concept. I also intend to describe terms such as flâneuse, flâneusrie/female walking, flâneur psychogeography etc. Since the focus of this study is to explore Psychogeographical Flânerie carried out by the flâneuse in Kalifeh's and Madhoun's selected works, therefore, the past research conducted on the selected texts is discussed in this chapter to determine the research gap.

2.2 Psychogeography

2.2.1 What is Psychogeography?

Psychogeography, as the term suggests, is a combination of two disciplines, psychology and geography, and is defined as the "study of the environment" and the impacts of geography on the "psyche streams of individual" (Nazir et al. 270). This term was introduced during the 1950s by a group of "radical poets, painters, and writers" known as the situationists (Bridger 286). Among these was Guy Debord, who described the real source behind the term: "The word psychogeography, suggested by an illiterate Kabyle as a general term for the phenomena a few of us were investigating around the summer of 1953 ..." (Knabb 8). However, the identity of the 'illiterate Kabyle', who contributed to his work, could not be discovered but Debord was of the view that the term is "not too inappropriate", rather it is in line with the materialistic perception which considers objective nature to be the condition of both "life and thought" (8). For instance, natural forces like the climatic conditions of a certain geography influence the society's economic structures and corresponding perception of the world that society might have. Thus, the goal of psychogeography is to better understand how the physical environment, whether planned consciously or not, affects human feelings and behaviours. This term can be used

in studies that investigate the geography, how people feel about it, and more generally, any circumstance or behaviour that appears to represent the same spirit of exploration.

Hanson is of the view that though psychogeography was introduced in the 1950s by Situationists however it had been practiced way before that. He further argues that the flâneur re-emerged in the 1990s literary theory and academia, capturing the interests of the "London Psychogeographic Association and Manchester Area Psychogeographic group" and this led to the rebirth of the practice of psychogeography (Hanson 11). He further adds that it became an "expanded tradition because this rebirth was literary in nature and the drawback is that the ideas of "potential radicalism" that were initially associated with this term, could be forgotten (11). Sidaway observes this expansion in Merlin Coverley's companion survey published in 2006, and highlights that the "tradition of walking, observing and witnessing" dates back to before Debord had coined the term in 1955 and this provides support to "contemporary psychogeography" (3). In support of this argument, Sidaway referred to the work of James Clifford Kent: *Psychogeographic Mapping of Havana, 1933* which explores the portfolio of the American photojournalist Walker Evans (1903–1975)" (3).

However, the contribution made by Debord in the field of psychogeography cannot be neglected. He wrote the *Theory of dérive* to explain the practice of psychogeography and the methods that can be used to execute this practice. Although, being a popular figure, Debord could not earn the favor of the wider world for psychogeography. But as time went on, this work of his gained recognition, as argued by Baker in his review published in 2001:

Guy Debord is everywhere these days, in a suitably clandestine way. He gets arch references in books by Julian Barnes and Bret Easton Ellis and has been seen behind everything from punk and the Angry Brigade to psychogeography and the postmodern theories of Jean Baudrillard. Debord was the leading light of the situationists, the small but immensely influential radical group who had their finest hour with the near-revolution in Paris in 1968. That may have failed, but the situationists' style and tactics have remained a blueprint for dissent, notably in recent antiglobalisation protests (Baker 2001).

Furthermore, this recognition turned psychogeography into a common practice and this common practice consisted of the usage of its references in the field of literary practice, academia, and field manuals, as Philip notes:

> it has become commonplace to cite the Situationists, to summarise their work, and to claim to walk in their footsteps – as psychogeographers. As a result, the terms Situationist and psychogeography are used loosely, liberally, and as synonyms, which they are not. (174)

Michell also holds a very strong opinion about Debord's psychogeography and is of the view that though psychogeography is considered an old practice that originated way before Debord introduced the term however "a whole cottage industry is devoted to Debord's ideas about psychogeography. (10)

With the evolution of this practice, its meaning also changed. Initially, it had a political connotation attached to it but later it changed into an academic connotation focusing more on studying psychology and the impacts of the environment on humans. By political connotation, it means that this term was actually associated with movements such as "Dadaism, Marxism, Surrealism and national liberation struggles in French colonies" and did not pique the interests of the "French academic geographers" (Sidaway 3). However, during the 1960s, we see that some geographers started using the term to refer to "environmental psychology" but on the other hand the "Anglophone academic geographers and Marxist geographers" did not directly refer to Situationist's psychogeography in order to study "spatial science and behavioral geography" (Sidaway 4). The real talk on psychogeography started when these geographers encountered post-structuralism in the 1980s, as pointed out by Bonnet:

> Although it has been established as a published body of ideas for over thirty years, situationism has only very recently and superficially been touched upon in academic geography. (131)

Most of the work on psychogeography produced in the field of academia is done by the Situationist International. They critiqued the conversion of urban spaces into capitalist societies and their main concern was to study the geography's impact on the human psyche. Moreover, we see psychogeography, spreading its wings in other fields

such as art, history, architecture which marks its evolution out of the 1950s psychogeography.

2.2.2 Psychogeography as a Practice

Recently, researchers in the field of psychology, have started examining the role and importance of urban settings and their visual experiences. However, the major flaw of such research has been the failure to take into account the extent to which it can bring "radical social change" (Bridger 285). Furthermore, "critical academic research" has generally tended to be "detached from activist work and practice" and has taken on an "apolitical" perspective of radical transformation (285). The fact that situationist work combines activism, the arts, and theoretical knowledge to explore the study and critique of surroundings in contemporary society is one of its main advantages. However, in the fields of geography, feminism, LGBTQ studies, psychology, and cultural studies, limited "empirical and theoretical work" has been done on psychogeography and situationism and thus, the available literature only provides an insight into the historical development of the "situationist theory and practice" (286).

The situationist was a group, interested in investigating the geographical impacts on the behavior and emotions of the people and were against the capitalistic transformation of urban environments. Therefore, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, they came up with a practice known as psychogeography, which they believed to help study the structured and unstructured effects of geography on the human psyche. The situationists also proposed that the psychological investigation of the environment can help to reimagine the landscape. For this purpose, new techniques should be developed, based on the idea of exploring the emotional contours of a place or an environment which might lead to the discovery or creation of new places.

Therefore, to carry out these psychogeographical investigations, the Situationist International came up with the method of dérive which is walking without a purpose and this is done by drifters who leave their work behind and get lost in the passion for terrain (Sidaway 2). This method is different from the normal way of walking in the urban environment like walking from home to school, or a park etc. Bridger argues that it focused on exploring and investigating specific locations like where "buildings were being

demolished to make room for new retail malls and high-end housing areas were frequently the focus of investigations" (286). Bonnet defines dérive as:

> . . . an unstructured wandering through the landscape, allowing oneself to be drawn consciously and unconsciously towards those sites and movements that heighten one's experience of place and disrupt the banality of one's everyday life. (136)

Wanderers would take an interest in those landscapes, buildings, and architecture that have been abandoned and would try to navigate through these to observe the wandering of people in the urban environment (Plant 39). While talking about the method of dérive, Knabb quotes Chtcheglov's definition which states:

> . . . dérive was to the totality exactly what psychoanalysis ... is to language. Let yourself go with the flow of words, says the analyst. He listens, until the moment when he rejects or modifies. (372)

Plant in his book, *In The Most Radical Gesture,* defines dérive as "to notice the way in which certain areas, streets, or buildings resonate with states of mind, inclinations, and desires, and to seek out reasons for movement other than those for which an environment was designed" (59). The situationists' dérive was undoubtedly inspired by surrealist strolls, notwithstanding discrepancies between the situationist project and the surrealist project. The realm of floating encounters that surrealism conjured up depicts the wonder seeker as drifting according to whim and want.

Wood argues that dérive is an essential method of psychogeographic practice as it studies the emotions and feelings of individuals, influenced by the "conditions of urban society" (Wood 186). The purpose of the Situationists was to implement the dérive to discover the "unit of ambiances" which will help to discover and reconstruct the "city as a terrain of passion (187). Now here the word ambiances stands for the emotional attachment with a certain place and at the same time it can be used to refer to any "small neighborhood" (187). Knabb in his translation of Debord's work states that Debord acknowledges the fact that these ambiances could be fleeting. He adds:

> The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of

> least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places – all this seems to be neglected. (25)

Now the important thing here is how many people can carry out this dérive and how much time should be spent on it. Wood argues that though Debord acknowledged that the dérive can be carried out alone but usually it is executed in the forms of small groups. They carried out this activity by leaving the usual activities of either leisure or work behind and "let themselves be drawn by attractions of the terrain'' and the "average duration was a day" (187). The Situationists believed they might learn more about the city's ambience by allowing themselves to be dragged through it by the city. That's how the situationist created the "surrealist and lyrical descriptions of cities" (McGarrigle 56). Therefore, practical actions, art, and writings were employed to question the capitalist creation of space and "political theoretical treatises" on how to reclaim "urban environments from capitalist businesses and political parties, as well as subversive maps", were written by psychogeographers (Bridger 286).

Situationists also proposed that the psychogeographical investigation of the urban society is possible with the creation of new maps that will be used as "blueprints for a situationist town" (Bonnet 136). Bonnet further adds that it was Chtcheglov (1981), who best expressed the visionary character of these plans and anticipated the separation of cities into emotional intensity zones through which people would be in continual dérive. Other, somewhat less bizarre plans called for the establishment of psychogeographical testing centres that might help to discover new angles of "daily life" (136).

2.2.3 Literary Psychogeography

The art of psycho-geography aims to document and comprehend how the external world affects the human mind and vice versa. This phenomenon in literature, which is defined as any work that can portray the impact of a certain location in a city or landscape on the human mind or a person's ability to project inner thoughts or moods onto the outside world, is known as literary psycho-geography. "Popular fiction, comic books, journalistic writing", songs, films, government reports, and ad slogans are all examples of writings that might contain passages or fragments that capture "psycho-geographic moments" in

descriptive language (Tijen 5). This includes well-known literary pieces like poetry, novels, or dramas. When all of these text shards are combined, it will be possible to "read" the life narrative of the (city) landscape and "chart" the changes in atmosphere and mood that have occurred (5). Books are a way to learn about a community and provide this connection to the past. The relationship between the two can also be reversed: discovering books and their writers while meandering around a cityscape.

The process of literary psychogeography allows individuals to freely walk through place and time with their eyes and ears, seeing and listening. It does this by bringing all those dispersed pictures into reach. It looks at how physical circumstances affect people's innate behaviour as it is depicted in literature, which is defined here in its broadest meaning as all written records left by a people or an age (Tijen 5). Although poetry and non-literary materials are also accepted, novels tend to be the most common source. The deciding factor is whether a text has a psycho-geographic element that might appear to influence the human psyche while describing the physical urban environment. It is insufficient to merely list topographical names. The description must have aspects that can convey to the reader the mood created by the environment physically. The influence of the mind on the environment is also a possibility, which is the reverse. Certain ideas have the power to rock structures to their very foundations. Cloudy skies can be cleared by looks and frigid streets can be cheered by them. There are no boundaries to the power of the mind.

Literature that uses the word psychogeography or reflects on it encompasses a diverse range of textualities, including scholarly debates across numerous academic fields. An important milestone and assessment in this respect is the publication of the edited book *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Richardson believes that there is no definitive answer to what really psychogeography is and she explains this in her introduction to the collection of fourteen chapters:

> The beauty of the inexact art that is psychogeography, appearing in the innumerable forms that it has historically taken and continues to display, attests to the durability and relevance of it today ... . to absorb the urban space it occupies, situating itself socio-politically and creatively employing innumerable ways to express itself. (25)

Numerous accounts that reflect the use of psychogeography in the literary academic field. Sidaway argues that there have been several interactions about psychogeography by "geographers and in geographical journals", yet many just include one citation or a footnote for psychogeography (8). Additionally, there is an overlapping body of literature produced by the study of mobile ethnographies that parallels (but does not frequently cite) psychogeography. Its growing presence can be observed from the inclusion of a chapter on urban exploration and psychogeography in the recent textbook *Creative Methods for Human Geographers* (8). Like much psychogeography, this chapter is mostly concerned with cities. However, Richardson adds the following in her preface to *Walking Inside Out*:

> While the term psychogeography has generally been applied to urbia and can be a convenient way to differentiate the walking from that carried out in the countryside, its urban and rural deconstruction is just one of the qualities that add to its indefinable character. (7)

As Richardson indicates, there are developing connections between psychogeography and the resurging interest in writing about rural landscapes and wildlife. This resurgence is based on a lengthy history of geographical literature and poetry in England that dates back to "Romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth," who turned to the "rural and sublime" in response to the advance of industrial capitalism (Sidaway 8). With a late interwar flourish from a booming London and its surrounds, topographic works flourished in late 19th- and early 20th-century Britain as well. A non-metropolitan example is "Edward Thomas' 2009 book *The South Country*", which was originally published in 1909 and was reissued with an "Introduction by Robert Macfarlane", a writer of nature writing (Sidaway 9). The writings of MacFarlane would later become a part of a trend in nature writing that was made attractive "by their knowledgeable engagement with environmental issues and their habit of blending multiple genres" in turn (9).

2.2.4 Memory and Geography

Once confined to the field of psychology, memory has now become a subject of study in various disciplines, including "anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, literary studies, communication, history, and geography" (Hoelscher and Alderman 3). It plays a role in shaping "social space" and providing context for modern identities, creating a

dynamic interplay between "individual and collective memories" (3). This interdisciplinary approach sheds light on the complex nature of memory and emphasizes its importance in understanding societal formations and the contestation of identities. Memory and geography intersect at the crossroads of human experience, influencing how we define ourselves and perceive our surroundings.

The relationship between "memory, place, and identity" lies at the core of geographical research, offering insights into how individuals navigate "post-conflict and post-war landscapes" (Drozdzewski et al. 1). Memory acts as a catalyst for the construction and preservation of personal and national identities, manifesting itself through the physical and emotional landscapes of a place. From evoking sensory experiences to eliciting emotional responses, memory possesses a profound emotional capacity capable of transporting individuals through time and space (1).

The convergence of memory and geography in literary texts provides a deep exploration of how individuals engage with and interpret their surroundings. Raymond's analysis delves into the intricate relationship between memory and place, highlighting how authors employ "psychogeographical practice" to uncover layers of meaning in "urban and rural landscapes" (Raymond 87). Through the analysis of various literary texts, the author concludes that memory serves as a powerful force that shapes characters' perceptions of their environments and influences their interactions with the world around them. Furthermore, intertwining memory with geography evokes a sense of nostalgia, longing, or even trauma associated with specific places. In this way, memory becomes a lens through which characters navigate the complexities of their physical and emotional landscapes. By weaving together personal recollections and collective history, these literary works provide readers with a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of memory and geography. They invite us to contemplate how our past experiences inform our present perceptions and how our relationship with a place is inherently tied to the memories we cherish.

2.2.5 Female Psychogeography/Flâneusrie

The situationist critique of "environmental gentrification" is arguably still relevant, especially in the context of "town and urban planning" in both Western and non-Western

nations. The situationist approach to psychogeographic study, on the other hand, "maintains a male bias" (Bonnett 2). Former situationists' accounts, such as Ralph Rumney's, reveal that some situationists maintained "sexist and anti-feminist attitudes" about what women should and should not do in domestic situations (Pinder 149). Furthermore, Jenks notes that the famous female situationists such as Miche le Bernstein's contributions to the development of situationist theory were not fully acknowledged,

> One of the curious things about the IS [sic] was that it was extraordinarily antifeminist in its practice. Women were there to type, cook supper and so on. I rather disapproved of this… (Jenks 17)

Geographers, critical and narrative psychologists, and community activist organisations have begun to confront this prejudice in order to analyse men's and women's perceptions of social surroundings and to oppose gendered disparities in society. "Precarias a la Deriva", in English known as *Precarious Women Workers Adrift* is a feminist, critical, political, and scholarly collective headquartered in Madrid, Spain (O'Neill 157). They use situationism and the dérive practise to investigate the impact of home, work, and leisure contexts on women's lived experiences of the world, with a special focus on how capitalism's structural circumstances affect women's experiences (Kitchens 242).

A group of narrative psychologists in East London has done similar work (Burnett et al. 140). They undertook a dérive to reflect on how the structural pressures of a paid job, childcare, and other responsibilities influenced their gendered subject positions and discovered that it was really quite difficult to 'divert' themselves from habitual patterns of behaviour and ways of being in the world. Their way of creating a dérive narrative helps develop psychogeographic studies.

2.3 Flânerie

Flânerie, encapsulating the act of leisurely wandering and keen observation, persists as a prominent "motif" in urban literature, sociology, and artistic expressions, especially within the fabric of "metropolitan existence" (Tester 1). It embodies a profound engagement with the essence and rhythm of city life, portraying a unique perspective on the urban landscape and its inhabitants. Urban space is the core aspect of flânerie as it

provides the opportunity for the flâneur to roam around the city as he "seeks the crowd" and shares the experience by sketching a very detailed picture (Borchard 192). The flâneur, through walking, embraces a means of immersing in the city, subtly protesting against the swift transformations of the modern urban landscape. While the act of walking allowed the flâneur to navigate the rapidly evolving cityscape, Benjamin anticipated an unavoidable "loss of experience" for the flâneur within the context of the modern world (Argin et. al. 2).

Benjamin through his interpretation of Baudelaire's work, provided the concept of flâneur in the "Arcades of the nineteenth century Paris" (170). From the basis of these interpretations, he developed the "flâneur theory" that is still relevant in contemporary society (171). But this concept needs to be redefined out of the context of 19th century Paris and into the postmodern society. Many writers and critics among which Tester is the most prominent, have been working on reconceptualizing the concept of flâneur and came up with a modern definition, "the flâneur has been allowed, or made, to take a number of walks away from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris." (Tester 81). He called him a "post-flâneur" who has deviated from the "traditional concept of flânerie and has adopted the new methods of capturing the experiences" that he gains from strolling into the urban spaces (83).

The Post or the Cyber flâneur uses the latest technology like mobiles, cameras, etc. to "Photograph what he experiences instead of painting it" (Shaw 2). The physical urban space has also been changed into virtual space, where this cyber flâneur shares these captured photos with the rest of the community. Some critics call it the end of flânerie whereas some call it the evolution of this concept because the flâneur is used "conceptually" to comment on the issues of urban life without "limiting him in terms of time and place" (10). Thus, the flâneur is therefore no longer limited to the streets and arcades of nineteenth century Paris and has walked into the pages of the commonplace and contemporary urban culture.

Due to the technological advancements, the flâneur is faced with "constant surveillance" and this surveillance is a way to control and establish conformity in the society (Murail 6). With the "integration of cameras" in urban space as a means of

"surveillance" the nature of the space has been changed (Shaw 3). This provides the framework for studying the visual discourse with a focus on gender and the gaze under surveillance in the space. Gleber explains the "gender of the Flâneur which is always questioned in the contemporary society" (5). He highlights the fact that women no doubt face "obstacles" while roaming on the streets, but their "presence as a flâneur cannot be denied" …Women's presence is compared with a metaphor of "commodity", they are seen as an "object of desire and of gaze" (Tiller 86). Even the products are gendered female to increase the purchase and consumption of it. Thus, females' act of strolling the streets is usually linked with shopping which is for pleasure seeking.

2.3.1 Flâneuse

Flânerie was coined as the act of wandering the streetscapes and absorbing its esthetics. The prevalent use of the term masculine flâneur underscored the absence of a female counterpart. However, recent scholarship recognizes the emergence of the 'flâneuse,' even though her presence was confined and restricted to the streets of 19th-century Paris. In his thesis, Thao Nguyen claims that the flâneuse appeared in literature well before the late 19th century (293). The flâneuse, like Baudelaire's flâneur character, is an observer of modernity and possesses the ability to read the urban scene through her "interactions with the people" (294).

Though the early nineteenth-century flânerie was predominantly viewed as a gender-specific pursuit, but women's active engagement in flânerie evolved significantly throughout the twentieth century, mirroring the changing status and rights of women within the urban landscape. Elkin introduced the concept of "flâneuse-ing or flâneuserie" to describe women's exploration of streets and neighborhoods, allowing them to intimately understand and mentally map the city (27). This wandering practice enables the flâneuse to assimilate into unfamiliar territories, fostering a sense of belonging (Elkin 62). Elkin asserts the ubiquity of the flâneuse, stating, "the 'flâneuse' may be seen pretty much everywhere once you start searching" (18). Often existing in a state of "in-betweenness," she navigates from one locale to another (28). Elkin's exploration of the flâneuse's wanderings offers a poignant reflection on women navigating urban environments, delving into the boundaries, landscapes, and cultural essence of various places.

2.4 Researches on the Selected Texts

2.4.1 Sahar Khalifeh

Sahar Khalifeh, a renowned Palestinian novelist and feminist, was born in 1941 in Nablus, West Bank, and holds widespread acclaim across the Arab world. Her journey as a writer commenced amidst personal turbulence following the Arab nations' defeat in the 1967 war with Israel and amid a profoundly challenging marriage she describes as "miserable and terrible". Khalifeh's courageous decision to end her thirteen-year marriage defied societal norms, challenging both Palestinian conventions and familial expectations. The aftermath of the 1967 war spurred Khalifeh toward new perspectives and creative avenues, significantly advancing her literary career and prompting a profound reevaluation of her societal role. At the age of 32, she enrolled in Birzeit University's Department of English, coinciding with the completion of her groundbreaking work, "As-Subar" or "Wild Thorns", published in 1985. Upon returning to her hometown of Nablus in 1987, amid the initial Palestinian intifada, following her completion of doctoral studies in the United States, Khalifeh founded the Women's Affairs Center. This pivotal initiative now extends its reach across locations in Nablus, Gaza, and Amman, underscoring Khalifeh's resolute commitment to empowering women within Palestinian society.

In her novels, Palestinian researcher and writer Khalifeh confronts the profound impact of occupation on the daily lives of Palestinians living in towns and villages. Her 1980 novel "Sunflower" intricately captures the city of Nablus through the perspectives of diverse male and female characters, portraying them as subjects of occupation through various lenses encompassing class, gender, ethnicity," and their contextual positioning (Mansour, 1). Cut off from the external world and surrounded by antagonistic forces, they suffer emotional and sexual deprivation. Khalifeh vividly portrays occupation as a merciless force that not only consumes the land and its people but also ravages the city, rendering it a desolate "wasteland, a system of physical detritus" and human desolation, stunting its growth and development (1).

In Khalifeh's works, Palestinian history unfolds, revealing encounters with British colonialism and the Zionist settlement in Palestine. The protagonists navigate the struggle for fundamental rights and face threats to their identities. Through characters like the

Qahtan family, Khalifeh narrates Palestine's history, capturing the battle for self-determination amid colonial challenges and modernity's upheavals. Emphasizing the urgent liberation of women alongside Palestinians, Khalifeh portrays a society fighting for freedom and identity.

2.4.1.1 *My First and Only Love*

Khalifeh's work transports us to the last century's Palestinian history, with its encounters with "British colonialism" on the one hand and the "Jewish settlement" enterprise in Palestine on the other (Radwin, *My First and Only Love*). The actors in the Palestinian conflict are not the ultimate victims of both. Rather, they are voluntary participants who deal with both identity difficulties and the right to just live their lives. Khalifeh is teaching us the tale of Palestine via the life changes, goals, and decisions of the key characters by recounting the story of the Qahtan family. Furthermore, Kalifeh emphasizes the "freedom of women" is just as urgent as the "liberation of Palestinians from occupation" (Simon, *My First and Only Love*).

Women and Palestinians alike have the "right to self-determination" (Wadi, *My First and Only Love*). To her, the two are inextricably linked. In her works, Khalifeh resurrects a "civilization" on the edge of "disintegration and the consequences" and while fighting with "colonialism, Palestinian society was confronted with issues of modernity" (Suleiman, *My First and Only Love*). The characters do a good job of portraying this conflict. The Börsenblatt Newsletter called this work a "deeply poetic account of love and resistance through a young girl's eyes," and it earned Sahar Khalifeh the title "the Virginia Woolf of Palestinian literature" (Odeh, *My First and Only Love*). *My First and Only Love* by Khalifeh depicts the Palestinian people's sufferings as well as a dramatic narrative of love, success, and struggle.

2.4.2 Rabi al Madhoun

Palestinian author Rabai al-Madhoun was born in 1945 in al-Majdal, Ashkelon, in southern Palestine (now Israel). His family immigrated to Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip during the 1948 Nakba migration. He attended the Universities of Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, but due to his political activity, he was exiled from Egypt in 1970 before finishing his studies. During his time at Alexandria University, he joined the Democratic Front for

the Liberation of Palestine. He gave from activism in 1980 to pursue literature. His third book, Destinies, is the first by a Palestinian author to get the Arabic prize, which has previously been given to authors from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Lebanon, Kuwait, Iraq, and Tunisia.

As a British citizen working for the Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper in London, Al-Madhoun claimed that he has "a habit of leaving my stories open-ended, fundamentally due to the fact that reality has never provided answers or resolutions for our big questions - the crisis continues and the Palestinians are still fighting and struggling for their rights" (Flood, *The Guardian*).

2.4.2.1 *Fractured Destinies*

Gareth Smyth posted a review on the novel, stating that the novel *Fractured Destinies* gives us an insight into the "sense of loss and nostalgia" faced by the Palestinians. It is a book that takes the non-Arabic readers into the broken Palestinian destinies after 1948, highlighting the "desperate struggle and the division between the Palestine and Israel" (Smith, *Fractured Destinies*). The author does not provide any answers, preferring to portray delicately tinted portraits of persons and settings. According to Madhoun,

> I've been asked with both *The Lady from Tel Aviv* and *Fractured Destinies* why I left the end open," he said. "Well, the situation — the crisis — is open. How can I put an end to something that has not ended? (Smith, *The Arab Weekly*)

As pointed out by Lesly Williams, the novel highlights the quest for knowing one's identity as to "who is at home and who is in exile?" and depicts a rich picture of "modern Palestinian culture, replete with allusions to real-life historical and political people", as well as "vivid imagery of agony" (Williams, *Fractured Destinies*). As both the Nakba and the Holocaust have left indelible marks on the land and its people and through this fiction the author has tried to paint the picture of the pain, suffered by the Palestinian people in their own territory. The work is divided into four sections, with each movement flowing back and forth in time and occasionally deviating into a dream future in which Israel has "become a country for everyone" (Williams, *Who is at home?...*).

According to Cahill, the novel represents the "notion of alienation, lack of belongingness in one's homeland, caused by the political and social turmoil in the region" (Cahill, *Fractured Destinies*). The place that was once their home has turned into "no man's land" depriving them of residency or work permit (Hannigan, *Fractured Destinies*). The writer through the portrayal of characters demonstrates the experiences of the people in attaining an identity and meaning in their lives. As each of the characters tries to make sense of their experiences and make the greatest decisions for their futures by investigating the essence of home, it becomes clear that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Those who "stayed in Israel maintained their land, but they lost a portion of their identity" as a result of Israeli policies that systematically reduced traces of their history and culture in the region to history books (Cahill, *Fractured Destinies*). *Fractured Destinies* is a four-movement work that is as complex and intricate as a concerto, weaving several views and tales together like precisely matched harmonies and increasing in intensity as the severity of the problems confronting the various protagonists becomes obvious. The book does not have a neat, tidy ending, and the reader is likely to be left with more questions and concerns to mull over than when they started.

A review posted on "Arab News", states that the novel is based on the "theme of marginalization and suffering", and a future that promised nothing but the "loss of home and identity", with a complicated narrative, filled with nostalgia and pain suffered by the betrayed (Shakir, *Fractured Destinies*). The focus of the book is on Palestinians who have been uprooted and forced to leave their homes, as well as those who have struggled to stay. Like a concerto, the author has divided the novel *Fractured Destinies* into four movements. Julie's voyage from London to Acre opens the novel, but it quickly widens to encompass Walid's journey back to his hometown, as well as the perspectives of family and friends — those who live and suffer in chained freedom and of those who have immigrated (Wadi, *Fractured Destinies*).

Ferhood and Janoory explored the novel *Fractured Destinies* through "Homi Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and mimicry" (1). The study offers a detailed analysis of the protagonist Ivana Ardakian's journey as she navigates between Palestinian and Western cultures during the British Mandate era. As Ardakian moves across geographical and cultural boundaries, she embodies Bhabha's concept of the ambivalent subject,

ultimately questioning established ideas of identity and belonging. This exploration sheds light on the ways in which individuals negotiate their identities within the context of colonial legacies and cultural hybridity.

2.5 Research Gap

The research is different from the above-mentioned studies as its focus is on the portrayal of flâneuses in Madhoun and Kalifeh's selected novels. The thesis aims at studying the ways a female executes the act of flânerie. It also investigates the psychogeographic impacts of flânerie on the flâneuses of selected texts while they execute the act of strolling and exploring the city.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology and the process for carrying out the present study are elaborated. It also discusses the adopted theoretical framework for the research. The chapter focuses on how the research systematically answers the objectives and questions of the study.

3.1 Research Method

As discussed earlier the research methodology lays out a systematic path that the researcher follows to conduct research. Moreover, to complete this systematic process certain tools are required and these tools are known as research methods. Research methods, as stated by Griffins, are "concerned with the ways you carry out your research" and the nature of such research "depends upon the type of research you want to conduct" (3). Since my research is based upon the analysis of the selected Palestinian texts: *My First and Only Love* by Sahar Kalifeh and *Fractured Destines* by Rabai al Madhoun, therefore the research method chosen for this study is 'textual analysis'.

The purpose of my study is to explore the concept of women walking the city and how the environment affects their emotions and identities. To navigate this exploration effectively, the study opts for the method of textual analysis which examines the "content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts" (Frey et al. 1). Hence for this study, I found Mckee's model of textual analysis as the most appropriate one. This model is based upon the following steps: i) formulating research questions, ii) selecting appropriate texts, iii) selecting the theoretical framework for analysis, and iv) conducting analysis to answer the formulated questions (McKee 21). Central to this methodology is the practice of close reading. Close reading allows for a thorough examination of the selected texts, allowing for a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between women, urban landscapes, and their emotional landscapes. Thus far, the initial stages of formulating research questions and curating relevant texts have been completed, setting the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the chosen theoretical framework and subsequent analytical endeavors.

3.2 Research Sample

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the role of flâneuse in the contemporary world and the impacts geography has on the flâneuse while executing the act of flânerie. For this purpose, the research sample selected are two Palestinian texts namely: *My First and Only Love* by Sahar Kalifeh and *Fractured Destines* by Rabai al Madhoun. As indicated earlier the methodology lays out the path for the execution of research, therefore my research follows a qualitative theory-based approach. Also, the theory that is used as the framework for analysis of the selected text is Elkin's concept of psychogeography and female walking.

3.3 Research Design

The present research falls under the Interpretivist Paradigm which "opposes" the idea of a "single solid objective reality" (Guba 204). Guba and Lincoln define interpretivism as, "it refuses to adopt any permanent, unvarying (or foundational) standards by which truth can be universally known" (204). Thus, the analysis of the study is based on the experiences of the selected female characters and their social contexts. These psychogeographic impacts are further explored using Elkin's notion of *Flâneuse-ing* the city.

As the first step of this qualitative theory-based research, the researcher has formulated research objectives and questions based on their relevance with the study. These research questions and objectives make the research specific to the area being explored. The next step is to link these objectives and questions with the chosen theory of flânerie. Bridging the link between the objectives and theoretical framework is very important as it lays down the path the researcher follows to achieve the goals of the study i.e. to carry out the analysis of the text. The textual analysis of the selected texts is done by applying the concept of female walking given by Elkin. This analysis is going to help in understanding the role of females in exploring the cityscapes and the impacts geography has on them.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

In this study, Elkin's concept of flâneuse and psychogeography serve as the primary theoretical framework for analyzing the selected Palestinian texts. Additionally, Woolf and

Baudelaire are incorporated as secondary theorists to provide further support and context for the research.

3.4.1 Baudelaire's concept of Flâneur/Flâneuse

In the 19th century, Baudelaire coined the term "flâneur – a man" who has the ability to "reap aesthetic meaning by dwelling into the crowd while remaining detached from it..." (Parson 34). The flâneur because of his idleness and keen observational abilities, reads the city like one would read a manuscript. He is the "man of the crowd rather than the man in the crowd", as Tester describes it (Tester 1). His knowledge of this situation makes him stand apart from the crowd even if he is surrounded by it. Baudelaire defines him as "a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes" (Baudelaire 21). He carries the act of flânerie, out of enjoyment rather than in a rush to go from one location to another. It's a method to wander and experience the cityscapes, its hidden nooks and corners.

In the 19th century, cities like London and Paris experienced significant growth, reshaping urban life. This expansion gave rise to a new urban lifestyle, described by Baudelaire as that of flâneurs or strollers in the contemporary metropolis. These individuals embraced leisurely wandering through the cities, observing and uniquely interpreting the evolving urban landscape. This figure represented the contemporary period in a whole new way. The flâneur, in Baudelaire's view, walks through the "maze-like alleys and secret areas of the city", taking in its charms and frightful delights but somehow staying "distant and aloof from it" (Baudelaire 21). The flâneur, contrary to the pressures of capitalist society, strolls aimlessly, resisting the drive toward consumerism. Engaging in speculation about the lives of passersby, crafting stories, eavesdropping on conversations, and keenly observing people's attire, they immerse themselves in the contemporary landscape. However, in contrast to many of Baudelaire's intellectual predecessors, the flâneurs are not merely interested in the aesthetics of classical works of art; they also like the "modern and the current" (Parson 36).

Cities have the paradoxical property of bringing enormous numbers of people together in constrained areas while simultaneously dividing them from one another. Flâneurs therefore wanted to rediscover a sense of belongingness, as Baudelaire puts it, "to be away from home and yet to feel everywhere at home" (90). He further describes him as

a “gentleman stroller of city streets” and believed that the flâneur played a crucial part in comprehending, engaging with, and depicting the city (Baudelaire 90). And in this primarily male-dominating worldview that was attempting to experience modernity, women were left out and assigned fairly questionable roles like prostitutes. Additionally, there were certain limitations on what “she could be, could do, and where she could go” at that time. Thus, Baudelaire excluded the role of women from flânerie, making it purely a male activity.

3.4.2 Virginia Woolf as Twentieth Century Flâneuse

Virginia Woolf, through her work, has made major contributions to the world of writing, feminism, and modernism. Her writing style not only captivated the readers but also the critics, turning her into a literary genius. However, a major contribution on her part that is usually overlooked, is the concept of *Flâneuse*, a woman who roams the streets or explores the geography of the city. Her works reflect the importance she placed on “walking” (Elkin 88). As through her works, she opened up new literary territory for women to explore and write about by emphasizing both the “internal and outside landscapes” in her characters in *Mrs. Dalloway, A Room of One’s Own, and Street Haunting*. (Elkin 93).

Woolf’s portrayal of the 20th-century flâneuse in her works challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations by presenting women as active participants in the urban environment, a concept often overlooked in historical discourse. In her article *Street Haunting: A London Adventure,* Woolf takes on the role of a flâneuse and leads the reader on a tour around the streets of London while pretending to be in the market to buy a lead pencil. As soon as she starts walking, she is able to push past her identity and disappear from society’s gaze. This scene creates the image of the flâneuse, “hovering on the periphery of the crowd” as she gets “lost both physically and emotionally” (Solnit 186). By embodying the persona of the flâneuse in her essay ‘Street Haunting,’ Woolf defies societal norms and engages in imaginative ambulation, similar to the “experience of the nineteenth-century flâneur,” thereby forging a sense of identity through her wanderings and exploring the city’s landscape (Reeves 13).

Woolf's wanderings extend beyond the public city streets to include the private sphere. Unlike the traditional flâneur who "confines his activities to public spaces," finding a sense of belonging there, Woolf's wanderings "acknowledge the existence of the private," particularly the female sphere, and blur the boundaries between the private and public realms in the modern city (Reeves 16). Through this work, Woolf underscores a unique contribution to the concept of the flâneuse, one that challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations.

Moreover, Woolf's essay *Street Haunting* serves as a means for individuals, particularly women, to navigate the city and assert their presence in a way that challenges societal norms. By walking anonymously in the city, individuals become observers detached from gendered roles, allowing them to perceive the city's emotional landscape and invisible boundaries. This concept of "female flânerie, or flâneuserie", not only changes how individuals navigate urban spaces but also empowers them to assert their right "to observe, occupy, and organize space on their own terms" (Elkin 288).

Woolf's keen attention to the "economic and gendered politics of space," as demonstrated in "Street Haunting," sheds light on the societal constraints faced by women as they navigate urban environments (Simpson 47). One such example from the text is her (Woolf's) spying on a woman who looks like a dwarf and enters a shoe shop with two ordinary women. The dwarf woman enjoys trying the pair of shoes because she thinks her feet fit perfectly. Here, Woolf adds, "And as this was the only occasion which she was not afraid of being looked at but positively craved attention, she was ready to use any device to prolong the choosing and fitting" (Woolf 10). Woolf through this description emphasizes that women will always be the object of the gaze unlike the flâneur who is the subject – the onlooker, but this does not stop the flâneuse from exploring the city. Simpson adds, "No longer at ease with 'gliding smoothly on the surface,' the narrator now sees the underside of the glittering, twinkling commodity spectacle and the effect is physically shocking…" (50). Woolf is always conscious of the limits faced by women and the destitute as she wanders the streets. Through her observations of ordinary people's lives and her reflections on gendered experiences, Woolf crafts a narrative that challenges the traditional roles assigned to women in public spaces, highlighting the complexities of identity, gender, and class. This critical engagement with the cityscape allows Woolf to delve into the nuances

of societal structures and individual agency, enriching her literary works with a profound understanding of the urban landscape and its impact on gender dynamics.

In essence, Virginia Woolf's depiction of the 20th-century flâneuse not only challenges historical gender norms but also offers a unique perspective on women's experiences in urban spaces. Woolf's contribution to the concept of the flâneuse opens up new avenues for understanding the intersection of gender, space, and modernity in literary discourse. By delving into her portrayal of the flâneuse and her subversion of societal expectations, the research deepens its theoretical framework by exploring themes of identity, class, and gender dynamics within the urban environment.

3.4.3 Elkin's Concept of Flâneuse and Psychogeography – *Flâneus-ing*

Elkin's book on *'Flâneuse'* is a hybrid work of memoir, literary critique, and cultural history of women who walk around the cityscapes. In these pages, a native Long Islander "abandons" her family's vehicle keys in "favour of a life abroad and on foot" (31). She explores shattered relationships, unexpected career shifts, spiritual challenges, and intellectual revelations while roaming the streets of Paris, Tokyo, London, Venice, and Manhattan. These city streets become a canvas that both rejects and embraces her decisions and ideas, shaping her meandering journey. Within these urban landscapes, she discovers the essence of a flâneuse within herself, following in the footsteps of legendary female walkers.

As a young student, she draws a parallel between her affection for Paris and a romantic involvement with a man who cannot fully embrace her, leaving her feeling "unsafe" (Elkin 72). In this situation, she describes a need to learn self-assertion, to resist, to distance herself, expressing it as "I had to learn to push back, to get up, to back away from the window..." (72). This implies a necessity for establishing boundaries and asserting her independence to protect herself emotionally. Later, as an almost-French citizen, Elkin discovers that the country's famed public rallies are as much about nostalgia for what France could have been as they are about delivering change—a contradiction she sees mirrored in the inability to predict her destiny. Women walk through cityscapes "to seek fame and fortune or anonymity," "to liberate herself from oppression or to help those who

are oppressed," "to declare her independence," "to change the world or be changed by it" (Elkin 28).

Elkin delves into the concept of the flâneuse by critically analyzing the creations of diverse female artists and writers, exploring their perspectives and connections to renowned cities. This process involves juxtaposing their viewpoints and relationships with these cities alongside her insights, creating a multi-layered examination of the female experience within urban spaces. For example, the 19th-century French novelist Sand, the British 20th-century literary figure Woolf, and the living cinema artist Varda stand out as significant "women who walked the city" for reasons that resonate with Elkin's views (Elkin 20). Despite society's lack of acknowledgment, women have continued to navigate the world based on their personal preferences and choices.

Elkin depicts these women wandering around different metropolitan areas, to examine "its hidden nooks, peeping behind facades, delving into secret courtyards", as for the flâneuse, cities are

> Performance spaces or hiding places; places to seek fame and wealth or obscurity; locations to release herself from oppression or to aid those who are oppressed; places to announce her independence; places to alter the world or be transformed by it. (22)

Though flânerie was considered a gendered practise in the early nineteenth century, but the engagement of women in flânerie was more systematically practised throughout the twentieth century, reflecting the evolution of women's positions and rights in relation to the city. In addition, Elkin defined the female version of psychogeography by coining the term "flâneuse-ing or flâneuserie" to refer to woman walking through streets, and neighborhoods, and exploring its geography to know the city better, eventually linking that knowledge to form a mental image or map of the city (27). This wandering helps the flâneuse to be more familiar with the urban geography, giving her a sense of "belongingness" in an alien or new territory (Elkin 62). She claims at the beginning of the book that the "flâneuse may be seen pretty much everywhere once you start searching" (18). She is usually in a condition of "in-betweenness", moving from one place to another (28). Through the exploration of the flâneuse's wanderings, we see that Elkin has provided

us with a beautiful reflection on women navigating the urban environment on foot while examining the limits, topography, and cultural feel of numerous places.

3.4.3.1 Sense of Place

The concept of a sense of place delves into the intangible aspects of a location, encompassing both physical sensations and spiritual connections. Activities like walking, strolling, and observing contribute to generating this sense by integrating experiences. Through our perceptions, memories, reasoning, and imagination, we grasp and characterize a place's atmosphere and ambiance. Elkin's portrayal of walking in the city beautifully captures the essence of placeness—the emotional and personal connection individuals forge with a place. Through her reflections, Elkin illustrates how walking serves as a transformative experience in understanding and connecting with urban spaces. She describes how the act of walking stitches "a city together, connecting up neighbourhoods", erasing boundaries and creating a sense of unity within the city (Elkin 27). Each step becomes a thread weaving together various parts of the urban fabric, blending them into a cohesive whole (27).

Elkin is of the notion that walking invests "spaces" with "meaning" (Elkin 32). By navigating the city on foot, she infuses it with personal significance. The streets, corners, and buildings become more than physical entities; they carry her experiences, memories, and interpretations, transforming mere spaces into meaningful places. Beyond physical movement, Elkin reveals that walking is a means of mental processing. It becomes a tool for sorting thoughts and finding clarity. In this way, her internal contemplation intertwines with the external environment, contributing to a sense of belonging and familiarity within the cityscape.

Walking, for Elkin, is an immersive experience—a way to engage with the urban stories unfolding around her. The city becomes a living, breathing entity with its own narratives, histories, and conversations. In this shared existence, she finds companionship, connecting not only with the living inhabitants but also with the echoes of the past that linger in the city's streets and structures. She beautifully likens walking in the city to reading, where every step is like turning a page to reveal diverse stories, conversations and lives intersecting with her own. Through this metaphorical "eavesdropping," walking

becomes a journey side by side with the living and the dead (28). This creates a profound sense of connection and continuity in the ever-evolving urban landscape. Elkin's portrayal illustrates that walking is more than a mode of transportation—it's a deeply personal and meaningful way to engage with the city, intertwining personal narratives, observations, and reflections with the essence of urban life itself, ultimately fostering a profound "sense of placeness" (27).

3.4.3.2 Spatial Politics

Spatial politics refers to the ways in which power, control, and social dynamics are manifested and negotiated within physical spaces. It involves the interactions between individuals, communities, and their environment, highlighting how these spaces are not just neutral settings but active arenas where social, cultural, and political forces intersect. Moreover, spaces within cities are often sites of "social control" and power dynamics (Elkin 20). Markets, streets, or public areas might serve as platforms for marginalized communities to exercise a form of control or influence through their presence, commentary, and interactions, thereby asserting their agency in these spaces. The psychological impact of the environment is crucial in spatial politics. The city, with its vibrant energy and diverse interactions, can empower individuals, fostering a sense of connection and engagement. Conversely, other spaces might evoke feelings of isolation and fear, impacting how individuals navigate and perceive their surroundings: every "nook had its corresponding misery" (18).

Cities also serve as repositories of history and change. Digging into their streets metaphorically unearths layers of revolutions and historical events, tying the present to past upheavals and social movements. These reflections on history highlight the ephemeral nature of societal changes and the persistent resistance to transformation. Additionally, the evolution of cities, mirrors the evolution of personal identities as Elkin argues, "Traces of the past city are, somehow, traces of the selves we might once have been" (103). Elkin explores the correlation between the evolution of cities and the evolution of personal identity. The changing urban landscape mirrors the transformations within human hearts, creating an intricate web of interconnected experiences. Collectively, these reflections

unveil the complex interplay between individuals and urban environments, illustrating how cities shape perceptions, behaviors, societal dynamics, and personal identities.

3.4.3.3 Flâneuse's Subjective Experiences/Role

The flâneuse embodies a sense of "in-betweenness", existing in the transitional spaces of the city (Elkin 28). She is depicted as a multifaceted figure, defying traditional roles. Her identity is fluid and versatile. She could be a "writer, artist, secretary," or someone without a conventional occupation (28). She might have societal role as a wife or mother, or she might revel in complete freedom. What unites her is her mode of exploration—walking through the city's streets, delving into its hidden corners, and uncovering its secrets. She navigates the urban landscape on foot, gaining intimate knowledge by immersing herself in its details.

The cities she traverses, serve multiple purposes for her— "performance spaces or as hiding places; as places to seek fame and fortune or anonymity; as places to liberate herself from oppression or to help those who are oppressed; as places to declare her independence; as places to change the world or be changed by it" (28). Each city becomes a canvas on which she writes her own narrative, challenging societal norms and questioning the notions of home and belonging as they pertain to women. Exploring geography creates a network of interconnected experiences among different flâneuses. They learn from each other, creating an intricate web of shared knowledge and experiences that defy traditional norms. Ultimately, the flâneuse emerges not as a mere female counterpart to the flâneur but as a powerful and independent figure, forging her own path and challenging societal norms through her explorations and experiences in the cityscape (29).

CHAPTER 4

FLÂNEUSERIE: SENSE OF PLACENESS AND SPATIAL POLITICS IN RABAI AL-MADHOUN'S *FRACTURED DESTINIES*

4.1 Introduction

Elkin's book about female walking gives an in-depth analysis of the ways women at present and women of the past, have executed the act of flânerie. It provides a suitable lens for exploring the city and creating a "connection with its neighborhoods" which in return creates a "sense of placeness" for the flâneuses (Elkin 21). She further adds that a flâneuse steps into the streets and corners of the city with the intention "to seek fame or anonymity", to seek independence, to write, to fight against oppression, to accept or resist the gaze of others and to find a "sense of belongingness" (28). She also has the habit of learning from her fellow flâneuses and they together develop a perfect network for the "reading of city" that does not even require any form of "cataloging" (28).

Therefore, this chapter delves into an analysis of Madhoun's novel, "Fractured Destinies, applying the theory discussed earlier. Madhoun, a Palestinian writer and journalist, gained recognition with his book "The Lady from Tel Aviv," shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2010. In 2015, he published his second novel, *Destinies: Concerto of the Holocaust and the Nakba* which won the same prize in 2016, marking him as the first Palestinian author to receive this honor. Translated to English as "Fractured Destinies" in 2018 by Paul Starky, the novel portrays the lives of Palestinians after the 1948 Nakba. Through its central characters, it unfolds experiences of love, displacement, and exile within the Palestinian community. The narrative intricately weaves together memory, geography, and their profound impacts on individual lives. Split into four parts, the story opens with Julie's journey to Acre, fulfilling her late mother Ivana's wish: "Take my remains and carry them in procession where I was born, just as London will carry me in procession where I die… I want to be buried here and to be buried there"

(Madhoun, 20). Julie, who had not visited Acre since she was a mere two months old, experiences a unique exploration of a place that holds deep ties to her family's history.

Walid, Julie's husband, accompanies her on this journey. His return to his homeland carries a different emotional weight, having spent his early childhood in al-Majdal Asqalan, situated in the south of Palestine now recognized as Israel. Another major character, Jinin, Walid's cousin and fellow writer, uses her writing to preserve the memories of her birthplace, Jaffa. Meanwhile, Jinin's husband, Basim, who holds US citizenship due to seeking refuge, grapples with feeling like a stranger in his homeland. Each character in the novel contends with an ongoing struggle, navigating a sense of being caught between worlds. They strive to reconcile issues of identity, drawing upon their memories to reconstruct and map a city that was once their home.

The following section of this chapter delves into the ways the female characters in the novel navigate the effects of geography on their psychological well-being. It examines how their surroundings shape their identities and explores the complex interplay between a sense of belongingness and the feeling of displacement.

4.2 Julie's account of flânerie – Sense of Placeness

The novel starts with Julie stepping foot on the staircase of a house in Acre that once belonged to her grandparents. She hears the sound of the church bell ringing as if it knew that Julie was here to complete the third and last procession of her mother's funeral (which though has already been held) and the voices of the shopkeepers from "Acre's old bazaar", fell silent as if in respect of the dead Ivana. At this moment, a woman named Widad looks out of her balcony, murmuring to herself, "Let's see who's died today!" and then proceeds to gather the dried clothes from her balcony (Madhoun 4). Her gaze fell on Julie who descended the staircase, with a porcelain statue in her hand and pondered: "She must be a stranger. What is she doing in our part of the town?" (4). Now here, the question arises: How Widad is so certain about Julie being a stranger in this territory? To this, Elkin argues that women kept their eyes on the street and "were often the first one to intervene" if something strange happened (20). She, while quoting David Garrioch, further adds that "in a way, the streets belonged to women" (Elkin 20). Therefore, Widad's actions confirm that women are highly observant of their surroundings and possess a keen awareness of the

individuals residing within their community. Additionally, they are sensitive to the events unfolding in their neighborhood. For instance, when something odd happens they are the first ones to pick out the strangeness of the situation, as depicted through Widad's character who is quite sure that Julie does not belong here, 'she is a stranger'.

Later Widad diverts her attention from Julie and resumes back to her work after saying a prayer for whoever died. In this moment, Julie finds herself puzzled with mixed emotions. She trembles, feeling perplexed by her current state, as it was her choice to venture alone to her ancestor's place. She grapples with confusion, questioning why she feels so profoundly affected by this location and its influence on her. She finds "the empty streets" and her mother's "neighborhood", especially the house, "terrifying" (Elkin 32). But at the same time, she is aware that there is no one who can offer her condolences or share her grief, as she is a total stranger in this territory. This shows that the flâneuse – Julie is "saturated with in-betweenness" of whether to go back or to move forward (Elkin 28). She is trying to fight these thoughts in her mind but suddenly she hears a song in the nearby street:

> Calm, sea, calm.
>
> We have been in exile too long.
>
> I long, I long for peace.
>
> Give my greetings
>
> To the earth that reared us. (Madhoun 5)

At first, she is unable to understand these lines as she is engulfed with the feeling of fear the house projected on her and focuses on leaving this place by abandoning the statue at the foot of the staircase. However, as soon as she ponders about the song, she shudders. The meaning behind the song made her realize her inner feelings. She is here on a mission and in order to complete that she first needs to calm herself down because if she leaves and abandons the statue, then her mother's memory and her whole existence will be swept off from this place. This song brought the flâneuse – Julie back to her senses and gave her the courage she needed to fulfill the task she came for. Thus, "She brought the porcelain statue close to her chest and raised her head a little towards the sky, "*Ten more steps Julie!*" (5).

She continued walking upwards and upon reaching the last step, she calmed her breathing and noticed,

> . . . church bells stopped and Abud square surrendered the noonday siesta that visitors to the city never noticed. In the old bazaar, the shopkeeper's cries resumed, echoing weakly and breaking on the edges of the quarter like exhausted waves reaching the shore. (Madhoun 5)

This shows the flâneuse no matter what she is going through, possesses the ability to keenly observe her environment. Her description of the market, the people visiting it, the place where she is standing, and the *noonday siesta* which no visitor noticed but she did owing to her keen observation. It also highlights the fact that these "lives and conversations" the flâneuse is privy to, has nothing to do with her life (Elkin 27). Sometimes the flâneuse simply walks and explores a certain geography with the purpose to connect as evident from Julie's action. She perfectly sketches the above picture and the way she puts her emotions into this sketch, feel as if she has blown a soul into it. The reader is able to see this place through Julie's eyes and feel the emotions, the flâneuse is going through. Though our flâneuse – Julie is in a state of in-betweeness because of the task she needs to fulfill and for which she is "walking side by side with the living and the dead…" (Elkin 21). But carrying the dead does not become a hindrance in her observation of her grandparent's place and its surrounding territory because her purpose behind strolling and observing is to simply "restore – a sense of placeness" (Elkin 27). It's a part of flâneuse's journey that she comes across the living and the dead and the important thing is that even in dire circumstances she is able to carry out this act of flânerie.

While analyzing her surroundings Julie takes a step forward, towards her destination. She tries to predict what is behind the closed door that "garbed in heavy mystery, stared at her" (Madhoun 9). She recalls the words of the guide Fatima also known as Sitt-Maarif that Acre is a place that nobody can hate and if anyone does that he will go blind. She further adds that the one who leaves Acre will die as a stranger. Julie contemplates these words because she thinks she can relate to the feelings of exile Fatima talked about as her mother Ivana "another resident of Acre who died a stranger" (9). Hence, the flâneuse is here at her grandparent's house to "restore – a sense of placeness" that her

mother had lost when she left Acre (Elkin 27). She wants to reclaim this territory on behalf of her mother and also, in return wants to be accepted by it.

> . . . What my dear? Your mother died in London a stranger from Acre? Well, just look at us here, strangers and refugees in our own country. So, there is no difference between the dead the living where we're concerned. (Madhoun 9)

The novel is divided into four movements and these are further divided into chapters in which the storyline continuously switches between present and past. As we move on, we are given a flashback of the scene of Ivana's funeral after which Julie gathers her ashes into two small porcelain jars on which the following phrase is inscribed: "She died here . . . she died there." and under these lines is written "London–Acre, 2012" (23). After a week of Ivana's death, Julie started her journey towards fulfilling the first half of her mother's wish: to take one of the porcelain jars containing Ivana's ashes to Waterloo Bridge. On her way to Waterloo Bridge with her husband, Julie briefly stopped by the Royal National Academy and beautifully presented the picture of the evening turning into night,

> . . . undisturbed by rain, unruffled by wind . . . jostled with comings and goings of every kind, with men and women of different ages and nationalities sharing their happiness and their grief's on the river's wide banks. Under the bridge outside the theater, a musical group played the *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo. (23)

Julie then leans on the metal railing of the bridge and by gently shaking the jar upside-down, she scatters Ivana's ashes into the water below. Once She empties the jar, the reader is taken back to the present, where Julie and Walid are seen enjoying a meal in a café at Old Acre bazaar. Following the lunch, they walk through the bazaar to reach the al–Jazaar mosque. As soon as she enters the courtyard, she leaves her husband behind and takes out a silk scarf from her bag, covers her head with it, and enters the mosque after taking her shoes off. She is seen chanting something, moving and dancing like a Sufi. These actions made her husband wonder where she learned all of this because she is neither practicing her parent's religion nor her husband's. Now it raises a very important point here that a place/geography has certain impacts on the psyche of the individual and these impacts can

either be positive or negative; they either attract or reject a person's attention. Therefore, as a flâneuse, Julie, with her keen observation of the surroundings demonstrates her ability to understand and follow the customs and rituals of a mosque because "the city turns you on, gets you going, moving, thinking, wanting, engaging. The city is life itself…." (Elkin 44). The way Julie acts in the mosque shows her desire of *'wanting and engaging'* that she feels can be fulfilled by mimicking the actions of other people present in the mosque. Upon questioned by her husband about her recent behavior, Julie replied, "I liked what I did! I prayed in my own way, and I was happy with my prayers." (Madhoun 26). This action of assimilation highlights that Julie feels a strong 'sense of belongingness' and this feeling is helping her to adapt herself according to the customs and traditions of the surrounding geography. The way she acted, also highlights the impact of geography on an individual's behavior.

Another reason Julie is able to feel a 'sense of belongingness' in this strange land, is because of the memories her mother shared with her about her past life. In the scene where Julie and Walid are sitting in Abu Christo restaurant near the harbor, Julie tells Walid, ". . . as her daughter, she told me lots about her memories of the city. She told me a lot about the wall . . . My mother use to say, 'Whether its men were weak or strong, only the wall protected and defended Acre' " (27). She further adds, "I'd like that wall to protect our backs, Walid" (27). These lines depict Julie's conflicting emotions. She seems lost being in this alien territory but simultaneously she feels a strong sense of hope that her existence may be accepted and she might experience the same sense of security, her mother had felt by these *'Walls of Acre'*. All of this change in Julie's behavior compels her husband to ask her about her visit to her grandparent's place. Julie starts by recalling Fatima (Sitt Maarif) dropping her off at her grandparent's place and how she trembled being left alone. She recalls being torn between the feeling of anxiety and fear as she stood outside that house. However, she mustered up the courage to ring the bell. To her surprise a lady named Samiya opened the door and greeted her warmly, indicating she was expecting Julie's visit. Julie describes Samiya as "beautiful lady . . . in her twenties, wearing a long black dress embroidered with silk, in which she looked like a work of art" (28). Then she pictures entering the house which was "decorated in traditional Arabic style: some old red sofas of material like carpet, with embroidered cushions scattered over them" (28). Afterward, Julie

makes a surprising statement to Walid that Samiya has decided to turn the building into a small guest house for the tourists as in this way the house "would retain its Oriental flavor" and most importantly, it will be named after Julie's mother – "Ivana's Guest House" (28).

Although all of this description amazes Walid but somewhere in his mind, he is still not able to accept Julie's thoughts completely and instead of further questioning Julie, he moves to order food for both of them. However, at this moment, Julie is seen lost in thought as "she looked at the sea, like a soul hovering over the water" (28). She tries to understand the conflicting impacts and resultant emotions that her grandparent's house left on her mind. She wanted an escape from these unpleasant emotions and did not want to imagine her husband's reaction so she hid it under the guise of an imaginary story that she narrated to Walid. Julie whisked off these fleeting emotions and "resumed her story, false happiness disguising her confusion" (29). She informs her husband that Samiya granted her full autonomy to explore the house alone because, in Samiya's perspective, Ivana would have entrusted the knowledge of the house's layout to her (Julie). In this scene, the reader realizes that Julie is crafting a fictional experience. However, her sense of storytelling makes it seem so real that it leaves no room for doubt and it is all possible because of her keen observation of the places, people and their emotions. Another reason behind this false narration is Julie's strong desire to be accepted by Acre. The way she depicts the events reflects the way she wants to be treated by Acre, in order to restore the connection of "placeness" (Elkin 27). This can be analyzed by the following lines:

> At top of the stairs, I turned left, and my eye fell on an old wooden grandfather clock standing against the wall. My grandfather's grandfather clock. I couldn't believe it, I almost collapsed weeping. I lifted the statue a little over my head and placed it on top of the clock. It was as if I was looking at my mother after she had put her make-up on just before leaving the house. That image made me think about my grandfather leaving the house for the last time, hurrying towards the sea with so many other residents of Acre, under threats of bomb, thirsts, and hunger, to be either swallowed up by the sea or cast into exile. And while I was wallowing in contemplation, I imagined I was hearing the dawn call to prayers in the city's mosques, but there was no one left to pray. (Madhoun 29)

The psychogeographic impacts of this place on the emotions of Julie are quite evident as it led her to create a world that only exists in her imagination. It is within this realm of imagination that she can truly feel a sense of belongingness to this world. This change in Julie's behavior is so obvious that her husband finds himself perplexed, searching for the reasons behind this change. To him, it appears as if Julie is trying to retrieve and reclaim her lost Palestinian identity. Her change in behavior depicts her desperate desire to get accepted by the *Walls of Acre* and the reason behind this change is the geography of Acre itself as it possesses:

> . . . it's special magic and it's history, which was written in the streets, and which walked in the neighborhood alleys of its quarters and its ancient squares – its history, stiched in stone, which the sea thundered against day and night. Acre with its churches, its Franciscan monastery, its mosques, its harbor, its ancient market, with Zahir al-Omar, Jazzar Ahmed Pasha, and Napoleon scorned and humiliated under its walls, Sitt Mararif its popular guide, Hummus Saeed and the Paasha's bath. (Madhoun 31)

As geography either attracts or rejects the gaze of the observer and this feeling of attraction or rejection is so strong that it develops into intense emotions as evident in Julie's case. Her husband who is also a flâneur notices these strange sense of emotions in Julie for Acre and describes it as,

> . . . a happiness she had not displayed through the years of their long marriage; an increasing tendency to speak Arabic and use a varied vocabulary, having previously snuck to simple phrases; constantly touching the walls of houses, as well as those of public spaces and archaeological remains, which they visited like people visiting holy places. (32)

These lines indicate her strong sense of wanting to engage with the people and its territory. Her actions highlight her desire to devour every single detail of cities she visited. She "sniffed the walls of Acre" and stopped in Jaffa "to savor the salt of the sea" (Madhoun 33). During their walks to these cities, Julie showed her husband a keen desire "to smoke a joint" because she wanted to satisfy the "postmenopausal child" in her (33). However, this ten-day visit was not enough to satisfy her soul. She wanted more, and her craving to

explore Acre links back to restoring the connection of placeness she had lost when she left Acre being a two-month-old baby. In her mind Acre:

> . . . was no more than some fragments of recollections of old facts that Julie had gathered from her mother's dream and of present realities from their visit that they were now bringing to a close? (Madhoun 199)

Once more, Julie finds herself lost in thoughts, pondering what action she could take to reclaim her identity and get the approval of acceptance from the *Walls of Acre* and to make up to all the time she has missed so far. While being lost in these thoughts, Julie also gives us a flashback of the scene when she visited her grandparent's house. For her it was a "bitter episode" (201). She was again "saturated with in-betweenness" as to whether she should spill the truth in front of Walid or let it be buried in her heart forever (Elkin 28). While she refrains from directly narrating this story to Walid, she skillfully paints it for her readers, providing insight into her emotions and the reason behind her reluctance to share it with her husband. As she climbed the stairs of her grandparents' house, she heard the "sound of church bells ringing a strange, funeral peal", as if they knew Julie's purpose of visit (Madhoun 201). The sound of the bells stopped as she reached the door of the house and Julie felt this sudden silence strangling her. In a state of fear, Julie glanced back at the corner of the street where the guide Fatima stood, gesturing for her to knock on the door. However, instead of encountering Samiya in her twenties opening the door for her and offering a warm greeting, the situation was quite the opposite. Someone in her fifties opened the "two-panel door" and blocked the way to the inside of house with her arm. To ease the situation, Julie explained the reason behind her visit but could not seem to understand the lady's reply because she spoke a different language. At this moment, a man appeared behind her. He looked "at least ten years older than her" (201). He disregarded Julie and began questioning the lady. His persistent probing caused Julie significant embarrassment and unease. Eventually, in broken English, he inquired about the purpose of her visit. Open hearing her reason the man,

> . . . jerked back, and said first in Hebrew, 'Lo, lo, lo, lo!,' then in English, 'No, no, no, no!'. . . The man looked at the glass container like someone looking at an evil

> spirit that's emerged from the darkness, wanting to drive it away. 'We do not accept strangers in our house,' he shouted. 'Go on, go on, go away!' (202)

Julie found this reaction entirely unexpected, a moment that caught her off guard, prompting a vivid recollection, "I didn't go away. My feet were nailed to the threshold of the door, almost against my will" (202). Out of the blue, the man swiftly dashed towards Julie and seized the statue and "hurled it over my head and slammed the door in my face. The statue flew several meters up in the air, then fell. I heard the sound of it smashing on the staircase" (202). All of this caused an utter shock for Julie, who was unable to comprehend the sudden turn of events. Fear gripped her intensely, her heart racing in terror. At this pivotal moment, amidst the chaos, the sound of the church bells echoed once more, as she observed her mother's ashes, "rise into space in small, scattered clouds, which disappeared in the city sky. I stared around me like a madwoman . . ." (202). These emotions were inexplicable and inescapable for Julie because, for her, they seemed to engulf her without any warning or possibility of avoidance. Moreover, "it should have been a homecoming, but instead it was the most disheartening kind of reverse exile. . ." (Elkin 52). After contemplating, she could not find a reason to reveal the real story to her husband. She held onto the belief that her purpose was fulfilled as her mother,

> . . . wanted a part of her body to return after her death, whether it stayed in a beautiful porcelain statue . . . – or was scattered in the air of the city, and dispersed in its various quarters, as actually happened . . . In the end, Ivana returned to Acre. (202)

Hence, Julie yearned to rediscover her own sense of belonging, feeling a strong connection to Acre. She sought that elusive sense of home, echoing the sentiment of "to be away from home and yet to feel everywhere at home" (Baudelaire 90). The novel concludes as their ten-day journey comes to an end with Julie proposing to her husband, the idea of relocating to Acre. In her view, this was the sole way to restore that vital sense of placeness.

4.3 Flâneuse – The Object of Gaze/Desire

The flâneuse, when she ventures into the streets, tends to draw the attention of onlookers and passersby. Conversely, the flâneur moves through the streets and corners almost invisibly. He navigates without the concern of being scrutinized by everyone he encounters

because his presence often goes unnoticed. Elkin quotes Luc Sante stating that "It is crucial for the flâneur to be functionally invisible", but for the flâneuse, it's the opposite which is "at the same time unfair and cruelly accurate" (Madhoun 20). Flâneuse would love to enjoy this feature of invisibility but "it's the gaze of the flâneur that makes the woman who would join his ranks too visible to slip by unnoticed" (20). This argument can be backed up with different instances from the novel where female characters who are performing flânerie, are the object of the flâneur's gaze. One such example is found at the very beginning of the novel where a girl named Fatima works as a guide to help tourists visit different locations in Acre. The flâneur Jamil uses figurative language to describe Fatima's appearance to Walid.

> A women from Acre, dark as coffee roasted over coals. She drives you crazy and blows your mind! True, she is round as a truck tire, but she's an encyclopedia, my friend! And her tongue's quicker than a Ferrari! (6-7)

Later, when Walid meets Fatima, it becomes easier for him to recognize her as "Jamil's description of Fatima was enough" (7). It supports the above notion that once the flâneuse enters the same domain as the flâneur, her visibility becomes apparent. However, she does not allow the gaze of others to impede her exploration. Instead, she adapts to being observed and continues pursuing her purpose regardless of the attention directed at her. She is accustomed to the gaze and remains focused on her objectives despite it. Another instance is when Kwaku, Julie's friend, shares a story about his first encounter with his present girlfriend – a poetess, again portrays how flâneur sees women as an object of desire: "She was in front of him, and he stared at long, soft, blond hair. His glances took in her shoulders, from which hung arms worthy of a dancer" (13).

Each flâneuse encountered by the flâneur becomes a vivid stroke on the canvas of his journey. His unwavering attention to detail remains consistent, evident in both the examples discussed previously and those that will follow. Each interaction adds depth to his observations, enriching the tapestry of his experiences through these encounters with the flâneuses. In the scene where Julie and Walid indulge in "Hummus" and then stroll to the "al-Jazzar mosque", Walid, embodying the role of the flâneur, keenly observes every movement made by Julie (25). He perceives her,

> . . . turning around, dancing like a Sufi carried by intoxication to a world beyond our own . . . Her face was glowing like a flower whose Patel had been opened by the first rays of the sun, and there were teardrops like dew running from her cheeks. (26)

He was amazed to see Julie, exhibiting a strong sense of belongingness to the mosque, especially considering that she neither inherited Christianity from her parents nor converted to Islam. However, she emerged from the mosque carrying an aura reminiscent of a saint deeply "soaked her in belief" as if the belief had profoundly touched her being (26).

In the final chapter of the second movement, there is another instance where the presence of the flâneuse becomes an object of focus. Jinin and Walid attend the wedding of Zakariya's daughter, Lara. Walid, intrigued to learn about Zakariya's family, particularly his son, is invited by Jinin for lunch the next day to delve into the family's history. In this scene, Walid, embodying the role of the flâneur, paints a mental image of Jinin that his gaze could not help but capture:

> She ruffled her thick, flowing hair with all ten fingers. I watched her rearrange her hair over her shoulders and change the image she'd arrived with only a few minutes before.
>
> "you'll rival the bride tonight, Jinin!"
>
> . . . She took all of her youthfulness with her into a group of young people who were absorbed in dancing in the middle of the hall. I stood watching Jinin swinging her hips around with the lightness of an ear of wheat caught by a little breeze. I contented myself with a second glass of wine, as I watched the words of Steive Wonder work on the bodies of the dancers: "I just called to say I love you . . . (94)

Flâneuses are flâneur's object of desire as illustrated through the scene where the flâneur Walid meets his best friends Jamil and Luda. He fondly recalls his first love, Luda, who is now married to his best friend, Jamil. He vividly describes Luda to the readers, painting a picture of her in their minds: "a smile on her lips, like a comma between phrases, inviting reflection" (138). He further explains his unrequited love as, "Luda the object of our desire, distributed her feelings between us in installments . . . that the meaning of her words were

closer to his desires than to the desires of the other" (40-41). The flâneuse invariably becomes the object of desire and is unable to evade the watchful eye of the flâneur because "for him she is the keeper of mystery, with the power to charm and to poison . . ." (Elkin 16). The flâneur sees the flâneuse as a figure of intrigue and allure, someone who holds a certain mystique or enigma. She is portrayed as having the ability to captivate and also potentially harm or manipulate through her charm and allure. In this portrayal, the flâneur perceives the flâneuse as someone with a power that simultaneously attracts and intimidates him.

4.4 Spatial Politics

Jinin is one of the major characters who serve as the flâneuse of the novel. She is a writer and her writing depicts that she has "paid keen attention to the economic" and social factors such as power dynamics, haptic and intimate experiences, identity, and marginalization of the space she is residing in (Simpson 47). For instance, Jinin's story starts with her sitting in her room that "overlooked Jaffa's old port" (Madhoun 44). As she is seen working on her new novel, she receives a call from her husband inquiring about the extension of his residency visa and work rights, only to inform him that the Israeli Ministry of Interior has once again denied his request. Basim her husband, taken aback, abruptly ends the call. Sitting in her chair, Jinin attempts to envision her husband's reaction to the distressing news.

> She followed him in her mind as he returned to the house as usual by al-Bahr Street, dragging with him his share of failure. He took advantage of the contraction of his shadow at this time of the day to attack it, cursing it, then trampling it with his feet. He punched the air and cursed the year he had returned home, thinking it was a homeland, while his head argued with the walls of the al-Bahr mosque. (44)

Her imagination comes to a halt when Basim opens the door of the flat, cursing out the government, "The bastards! If I were a homosexual, they'd hang a human rights placard around my neck and let me work!" (44). These lines indicate the biasness of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians, who were even devoid of their basic rights to work in their homeland. Jinin tries to calm Basim down by assuring him that it is not something happening for the first time and it won't be for the last time either. She recalls the story of

Samir Badran who lived with his Israeli friend and was a member of "Tseva 'Ehad" a singing band and popular among the "Tel Aviv's gay clubs" (45). Jinin was the first one who had enquired and published a story about them on the *"Qadiata website"* (45). However, she was not quite satisfied with the results as it brought the homosexuals together but there was no one who could bring the "ordinary people" together (45). Basim symbolizes the plight faced by ordinary individuals—those who have endured exile or oppression in their homeland, witnessing their identities being erased from the very lands they call home. This portrayal underscores Jinin's comprehensive exploration of the challenges confronted by exiled Palestinians striving to reclaim their lost sense of identity. Basim's narrative embodies the larger struggle of individuals grappling with displacement and the erasure of their cultural and personal identities from their native lands. Jinin's detailed analysis within her novel sheds light on the profound struggles and efforts of these marginalized communities to assert their identity and regain a sense of belonging.

In her writing, she vividly portrays a range of emotions, delving into the tactile and intimate experiences shared between herself, Basim, and their neighbor, Bat Tzion. One striking example is Basim's contemplative moments on his balcony, observing Bat Tzion engrossed in her painting—an image that brings him a sense of peace and significantly impacts his emotional state. This quiet scene also signifies the evolving dynamics in their relationship. Basim and Tzion's connection began when he married Jinin, leading to a profound shift in their rapport. Despite their religious differences, they gradually became sources of comfort and tranquility for each other. Basim, however, refrains from using Tzion's full name, as it serves as a stark reminder of the harsh realities imposed by Israel. Instead, he came up with a new name, 'Bat Shalom', and started addressing her with this alternative name as a gesture of reclamation and peaceful recognition. To everyone's surprise, the elderly woman grew fond of her new name and eagerly awaited being called by it. For her, this simple act represented something profound—it made her "feel that there are people in this country who love peace, even though looking for them is like looking for a black hole in the universe!" (Madhoun 46). This sentiment conveyed her belief that finding individuals advocating for peace in their surroundings was as challenging as discovering a black hole within the vast expanse of the universe.

Jinin's storytelling transcends mere personal perceptions of the city; it extends to a profound understanding of the lives inhabiting her urban landscape. Her narratives intricately weave through societal complexities, shedding light on issues like women's violence, struggles with identity, marginalization, and the quest for a sense of belonging. Through her writing, she masterfully unveils these societal layers, portraying the city as a multifaceted entity. Her acute attention to detail allows her to vividly mold the cityscape within her writing, capturing its essence with remarkable detail. Inspired by these observations, Jinin meticulously documents these moments in her stories, immortalizing the intricacies and diverse experiences found within the city. For example, the 'Jawarish quarter' whom the Jews refer to as "'Mikhbeset ha-kavod shel ha-Aravim' which meant "Arab's Sham Laundry" . . ." (52). By giving insight into the quarter, Jinin sketches the picture of the violence committed against females under the name of 'honor killing'. She starts by flipping Basim's file which contained information about the acts of violence. Her gaze fell on "Nisreen al-Shawish", a women from "Ramla", who was "washed in blood and kneaded in earth" even before turning twenty (54). She left behind a "young child and her dream of a little house for the two of them" (54). Then she mentions another girl named Tannus, who was pursued by her brother for running away from home and was killed at the age of seventeen at "Rama crossroads in Galilee" (54). Jinin flips to the next page and finds the story of a girl from Haifa named Ala. She had sought protection from the Israeli police thinking that she was a "first class citizen" of this state but to her dismay the officer "Avigdor-'Fatty'" handed her over to the "family honor Laundry, which had cleaned her stain away soon after", instead of providing her protection (55).

Jinin grieved while telling the fourth story which was about Faryal al-Huzayyil. She belonged to a Bedouin tribe but she never followed their customs and traditions. Also, there was no one she could rely on, so "she spoiled herself, calling herself 'Fufu' . . . Fufu danced with passion to the rhythm of songs . . . Her body swayed like an ear of corn set in motion by the winds of her desires. Her nose did not carry a ring, but she retained the pride of a young girl in love with her femininity" (55). Her only crime was rebelling against her Bedouin identity and fleeing to Tel Aviv. Her murder was planned by her elder and younger brother who could not digest the fact that she got a job and was living independently in a city. The third one was her cousin and her fiancé who killed her so no one can take her

virginity. In the eyes of their community they became heroes who saved the honor of the family. In the fifth story three more heroes came forward. This time it was a husband, a brother-in-law and a nephew "who was barely on the edge of manhood, and who even his mother called loathsome, became a man with Abir's death." (55). The other two took the nephew with them in order to teach him the art of preserving the honor of the family.

The next victim was Safa, for whom her husband orchestrated a makeshift court that delivered a verdict without any semblance of a fair trial. She met her end on the washing lines, the very lines she used to hang her husband's clothes after cleansing away their filth. Another wife (Suheir) was killed by her husband because "She betrayed him" and according to the locals "a woman who betrays her husband doesn't deserve to bring up his children." (56). But the irony is that no one was able to testify how she had betrayed him. The last story Jinin read was about a "virtuous nursery teacher" Hala, who was from Nazareth, and was killed by an unknown person but the worst part is no one even bothered to look for the person behind her death as there was no such apparent reason behind her murder (56). After reading these stories Jinin closes her eyes to calm her emotions and a few minutes later she goes back to writing her novel *The Remainer*.

The stories of violence perpetrated against the women from the "Lydda, Ramla and Jaffa areas" deeply troubled Jinin (63). She began to harbor a sense of fear and apprehension for any Palestinian girl she encountered on the road, especially if accompanied by a boy. Jinin's concern stemmed from a dread of the potential future these girls might face—a future shadowed by the grim possibility of scandal and meeting the same tragic fate as the women previously mentioned. "To walk in the streets of Paris was to walk the thin line that divided us from each other . . ." because every "nook had its corresponding misery" (Elkin 13). As discussed earlier, the act of violence committed against women was the corresponding misery of the '*The Arabs honor laundry'*. These miseries started to haunt Jinin and she was afraid of channeling her fears into her stories because if this violence continues then her characters might join this "national honor laundry" soon (Madhoun 63). In addition, the case of exiled Palestinians or the ones that are living an oppressed life in their own land having lost their identity, is another example of such miseries, Jinin highlights through her writing. There is a clear line that divides

them and the Israeli nationals and depicts the misery of the Palestinians in their own land; being oppressed and having lost the right to enjoy what had been there's in the past.

All this struggle is projected through Jinin's relationship with Basim. Jinin holds Israeli nationality because her parents did not emigrate. However, Basim's family immigrated to Bethlehem which was free from the occupation's control. Thus, for Basim moving from America to Jaffa, as an exiled Palestinian, resulted in losing freedom, identity and the right to work. Now this oppression is impacting his psyche, daily activities and their married life. Jaffa has become a prison for him, therefore, he tries to convince Jinin to live with him in Bethlehem. But she simply rejects this idea because in her view leaving Jaffa behind meant erasing your existence from the territory. She had restored her connection with the Palestinian land through her "livelihood", "healthcare", "social security" and through her family's sixty years of struggle of not leaving "the country to the Jews" (Madhoun 60). Jinin's purpose is to preserve the city and her connection to it, but in this effort, she is losing her connection with her husband who is unable to find any sense of belongingness in this territory because the "love of Jaffa cleansed him" (61). Jinin could not wipe out his fear of Jaffa being swallowed by the Jewish fundamentalist because of his struggle to seek the "right to reside in his own country from strangers who had occupied it" (62).

Walking is a powerful tool that helps to "piece a city together; connecting up its neighbourhoods . . . it helps to feel at home" (Elkin 27). Jinin tries to create this feeling of being at home but fails in doing so because of the marginalization her husband experiences at the hands of the Israeli government. Her writing indicates the psychogeographical impacts of Jaffa which are different for both Jinin and Basim. For Jinin, Jaffa serves as the "place to liberate herself from the oppression or to help those who are oppressed" (Elkin 28). However, for Basim it creates a sense of rejection: having lost his identity and being treated as a stranger in his own land. Jaffa's oppression makes Basim feel like an "untouchable", who has lost the right to live an ordinary life (35). For Basim, coming back to Palestine – Jaffa "should have been a homecoming, but instead, it was the most disheartening kind of reverse exile…" (52). Instead of being welcomed, he was treated as a prisoner and it felt "both lonely and fascinating to be devastated so far from home . . ." (72). Jinin tries her best to help Basim to develop a sense of connection, but the rejection

from the system, the Israel has imposed on the territory, is so strong that he feels lost. He thinks there is no room left for him to restore the sense of placeness because despite being present in the record of Interior Ministry and police stations, he is still an “absent absentee” and his existence is like a “website that can be wiped from the face of the earth with the jab of single finger” (Madhoun 70).

Through Basim’s account of struggle, Jinin puts forth the life of the exiled Palestinians who do not even have the right to work as “sweepers” because for that purpose the settlers “employ Ethiopian and Eritrean women, and women from Darfur” and in case someone gets sick, he/she has to bear that illness till their death (75). Additionally, there movement is restricted, and in case if they plan to travel abroad then they have to go through a number of checkpoints and reach Amman to travel to another country. All of these restrictions are making Basim unable to breathe the same air as Jinin and he adds,

> The only thing the authorities in this country haven't said to me is that it's forbidden to sleep with Jinin, or if you sleep with her it's forbidden to have children. Should I say to them, 'Beseder, okay!"? Should I say to every Israeli-gvarim ve-nashim, man or woman alike 'Fine, okay, thanks!"? (75)

Though Jinin kept on denying this reality but this discrimination ended in souring their relationship. She believed that the homeland was the reason they came closer and it ended their exile. However, the results were quite opposite as Jinin later cries “My God, it's ridiculous that exile should bring us together and the homeland should drive us apart!” (Madhoun 79). Jinin understood this fact quite late that Jaffa rejected Basim’s existence and “screamed to herself, My God, how cruel Jaffa has become to us! Can't it stand two Palestinians born in different places living together here?” (80).

For Jinin, the city Jaffa was a “district that sustained her and inspired her and kept her pen in ink . . .” (Elkin 77). Jaffa is not only a geography for Jinin, rather it is the place that provides her ideas about creativity, freedom, identity, and a livelihood. Her job has guaranteed her a “psychological balance” against the discrimination inflicted upon the Arabs at the hand of the Israeli government (Madhoun 89). It also provided her “with a large dose of imagination, to confront the complexities of life in the country” (89). Jinin contemplates between her personal reflections and walk and uses it to investigate the issues

of marginalization, identity and social life. Jinin's approach to storytelling serves as a clear indicator of her intent to bring attention to "the problems of the women in the country." (99). Walking gives her the ability to return back to her room with renewed inspiration to write. It helps her to mold the city around her, which is evident from her stories and novel.

"Looking over their city, Parisians tend to write more about what's disappeared than what's still visible" (Elkin, 101). Same is this case with Jinin, who is trying to write the past of Jaffa. Her novel '*The Remainer'* depicts the history of this city Jaffa, what it was and what it has become. Through different characters she represents the social life, class division and marginalization of the Palestinians at the hand of the Israeli government. Through her writing, Jinin is trying to restore the connection the Palestinians lost with their land because the "traces of the past city are, somehow, traces of the selves we might once have been." (Elkin 103). Therefore, Jinin tries to rebuild the city to reclaim their Palestinian identity and the freedom. This goal, she believes, can only be achieved through writing as Elkin argues, "we can rebuild a world from the rustle of paper" (98). Additionally, fewer people remember the Palestine before the Nakba, so Jinin wants to document Palestine so it can live forever as "we die, but we hope our city's form and structures live on" (Elkin 39). Jinin's commitment to writing novels, stories, and documentaries serves a dual purpose. Beyond preserving the heritage of her country, she seeks to safeguard her relationship with Basim, which has been strained by the regulations imposed by the state.

The ending of the novel reveals that all the interaction between Basim and Jinin and other characters related to Jinin's life are actually the part of Jinin's novel which she has recorded to preserve for eternity. By creating characters with the same name as her and her husband, she has "found a way to include herself in the streetscape." (Elkin 19). She uses Basim – her husband as the flâneur to investigate social issues such as violence against women. Furthermore, her reference to the names of different places, depicts the ongoing tussle between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Additionally, her home and her relationship with Basim, symbolizes unity and she uses it to represent the "ruptured geography" of Palestine that was united through their marriage (69). But that unity could not last long due to the ongoing oppression and discrimination, the settlers imposed on them and their marriage became "tansit" (Madhoun 197). Hence, sometimes Basim comes to visit her and

the other time, she goes because both of them ended up living apart from each other – in two different cities and their whole life had now become a “take away” (194).

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis underscores the novel’s flâneuses as true embodiments of flânerie, deftly portraying the psychogeographical influences on their lives. Julie’s exploration stands out, revealing her profound emotional ties to places, especially her endeavor to reclaim a lost sense of belongingness in Acre. Whereas, Jinin’s writing reflects a deep understanding of the societal intricacies within her environment, delving into the profound social issues entrenched in her space. Her work showcases relentless efforts to trace the intricate history of her homeland, illuminating the complexities and nuances woven into its past. However, despite being under observation, these flâneuses exhibit unwavering resolve, adapting to scrutiny while maintaining a steadfast focus on their exploratory pursuits, undeterred by external attention. This resilience highlights their profound familiarity with being observed, yet their determination to steadfastly pursue their quests remains unshaken.

Comparing the contemporary flâneuse to Baudelaire’s notion, some similarities and differences emerge. For example, Julie’s profound emotional ties to places, and her way of navigating the cities, mirrors the way Baudelairian flâneur leisurely roams through the city. Similarly, Jinin’s exploration of societal intricacies within her environment reflects the flâneur’s curiosity about the world around him, though from a female perspective. Despite these similarities, there are notable differences. Unlike the Baudelairian flâneur who often blends into the crowd as an aimless wanderer, the contemporary flâneuse, such as Julie and Jinin, exhibits a clear sense of purpose and determination in their exploration of urban spaces. For instance, Julie’s adaptation to and understanding of the customs and rituals of a mosque demonstrates her keen observation, whereas the flâneur typically observes without actively engaging or assimilating into his surroundings.

Furthermore, the visibility of the contemporary flâneuse contrasts with the invisibility of the flâneur. While the flâneuse tends to draw attention, her resilience in the face of scrutiny and her determination to pursue her exploratory quests despite being observed highlights her self-determination and adaptability. In contrast, the flâneur moves

through the city almost unnoticed, free from the burden of being scrutinized by everyone he encounters. Thus, while sharing some traits with the Baudelairian notion, the contemporary flâneuse embodies a distinct sense of purpose, autonomy, and resilience in navigating urban landscapes, challenging societal norms, and asserting her presence in the city with determination and grace.

CHAPTER 5

FLÂNERIE: WAR, RESISTANCE AND LOVE IN SAHAR KALIFEH'S *MY FIRST AND ONLY LOVE*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have analyzed Kalifeh's famous novel *My First and Only Love* which is a story of politics, resistance, family, and love, shaped by the ongoing Palestinian–Israeli war. The main character of the novel is Nidal, who presents before us a detailed picture of the violence and other atrocities committed by the British and Israeli mandate, against the Palestinians. The novel opens with Nidal (in her seventies) an accomplished painter, who moves back to her family home in Nabulus in order to renovate it and reflect upon her life and the home her family left for her in inheritance. This house holds a significant place in the novel, serving as a cornerstone for Nidal's family history. It contains Nidal's paintings, her uncle Amin's unpublished memoirs, and the traces left behind by the resistance fighters, which take the reader back to the time of Nakhba in 1948.

The novel moves between past and present, portraying the Qahtan family's struggle against occupation. For example, Nidal's art echoes her childhood and her love for Raabi, a freedom fighter under her uncle's leadership. Her uncle's memoirs document the fight to liberate their homeland. The narrative reflects Nidal's torn life between love and conflict, paralleling other couples' stories shattered by war. Strong female characters, like Nidal's grandmother and mother, exhibit resilience and independence and are actively involved in the resistance movement.

The rest of the chapter is going to focus on the impacts of war and the resultant resistance as part of the life of Palestinians. The haptic and intimate experiences are also depicted through a keen observation of life by the flâneuse of this novel – Nidal.

5.2 Haptic Presence and Intimate Urban Experiences

The story opens with Nidal, the flâneuse, returning to her family home in Nabulus following years of wandering due to exile. Despite becoming a renowned painter during her travels through Beirut, Amman, Washington, Paris, London, and Morocco, a lingering

emptiness persisted within her. This fame could not fill the void of feeling “displaced and dislocated” (Elkin 235). For Nidal, the transient nature of an exiled life created an unrelenting ache—an existence deprived of a permanent home. She articulates this sentiment, lamenting “As soon as you settle down in one place, you have to leave and start all over again. As soon as you get used to a place, you have to leave, to go to another place, and another one, continually, without an end in sight.” (Khalifeh 1). Therefore, the only way to find a “sense of placeness” for Nidal, was to move back to Palestine (Elkin 21).

She returned with the intention to breathe life back into a crumbling house, infusing it with the vitality of its “historical significance” (Khalifeh 1). This house stands as a testament to time, a silent witness to generations, an occupation, and even a seismic upheaval that rattled the very foundations of the city. For Nidal, this enduring presence fosters hope, a beacon guiding her quest to resurrect what remains, acknowledging that the “past remains with us like history, and so do our memories” (2). Solnit’s notion that “objects in one’s home enforce the memories of one’s own identity”, finds resonance in Nidal's narrative (187). Every nook, the room, the courtyard, and each window, acts as a repository of familial ties and childhood reminiscences. Her memories are a tapestry woven with tales of heroes, martyrs, and battles. The word “revolution” is etched in her mind like a relentless force akin to a ceaseless “scorpion moving in circles” (Kalifeh 2). Amidst it all, every element within the house serves as a bridge, allowing Nidal to establish a profound “connection to complete” or “align” with the past (Elkin 122). Nidal’s acute attention to detail extends beyond mere physical touch, and she uses her eyes as an organ for “haptic visuality” that enriches her connection with the house and its storied past (Garrington 3).

One vivid scene finds Nidal in her grandmother’s presence, observing her with acute detail as she prepares for the day. Nidal’s keen eye captures her grandmother’s essence “. . . the color of her eyes, her tightened lips, her skin color, and the parting in her hennaed hair . . . Her hennaed hair, on the other hand, looked like corn cockle flowers and contrasted with her skin, which was as white as marble, accentuating her blue, clearly visible veins.” (Khalifeh 4). This keen observation mirrors Nidal’s critical assessment of her environment, recognizing its profound impact on her psyche and identity. She reminisces about her youth, embracing art as her guiding companion, traveling with her

like a cherished emblem, ". . . I believed in art and befriended it; I adopted it and carried it like a sign on my forehead. I confronted the world in order to carry a small brush, colors, music, light, breezes, and *mawawil*." (7). She contributed artwork to magazines and newspapers, showcasing her paintings at renowned venues like "UNESCO", "UNIFAM" and "Arab League building" (7). Despite these achievements, loneliness permeates her existence, surrounded only by a house brimming with memories. Her desire to transform this house into "a gallery with pictures, paintings, and frames. In short, a museum . . ." stems from the deeply entrenched connection to her familial history and the echoes of revolution (8). Also, she finds this plan convenient for passing this history down to the next generations who are not aware of the struggles and sacrifices made by her family and other famous leaders like al-Husaini. Once documented and published, the history will live forever.

With the recollection of past wanderings, Nidal shares her journey through various neighborhoods to find her uncle Wahid, a leader among freedom fighters. "Nablus was surrounded by its villages like a mother and her children", so she traverses these areas and captures the intimate urban experiences through paintings and poetry (Khalifeh 9). Her journey begins with a visit to the village of "Asira" in search of her uncle, exposing her to the diverse lifestyles of the surrounding communities. She started her journey by setting out at dawn, accompanied by her grandmother,

> . . . while the city was slowly waking up as if in a spiritual submissiveness. The streets were empty, except for us. The old market was still without customers, but some merchants were hanging out their merchandise while others were sweeping and watering the ground in front of their stalls, forcing us to jump and take long steps to avoid the water. (13)

Her description highlights that the flâneuse no matter what situation she is in, possesses the ability to keenly observe and capture the intimate urban experiences. Her description of the city's old market, stalls, and some merchants indicates that these "lives and conversations" the flânesue is privy to, has actually nothing to do with her life (Elkin 27). Sometimes the flâneuse simply walks and explores a certain geography with the purpose to connect as evident from Nidal's action.

These “meandering through the alleys and markets of the old city” with her grandmother gradually became an inseparable part of Nidal’s life (Khalifeh 16). The habit of wandering and exploring took root within her, becoming the very source of inspiration for her sketches, capturing these intimate moments for later generations. This affinity for wandering persisted throughout Nidal’s journey to Asira. Even amidst this voyage, she remained entrenched in her role as a flâneuse, perpetually observing and absorbing her surroundings. Upon her arrival in Asira, she noticed a call for noon prayer was being made and men walking towards a small mosque that was located,

> . . . in the center of the village, which was nothing more than a narrow asphalt street—or rather, it had the semblance of asphalt, with holes, gullies, dirt, straw, and sheep droppings everywhere. . . . Modest shops lined the street on both sides. They were facing the backyards of mud houses, hidden behind peach, fig, and apricot trees, with the fields of lentil, fava beans, and tomatoes beyond them. (17)

She feels the gaze of everyone staring at them as “if we had landed from Mars” (17). To understand their stares she analyzes the difference between her and the villagers’ appearance: “With my dress, braids held with ribbons, shiny shoes, and socks, I had the look of a city girl, very different from the village children, most of whom were barefoot, their hair uncombed and without ribbons” (17). It is noted through Nidal’s keen surveillance that the villagers were giving quite a lot of importance and respect to their presence as being from the city was considered a privilege. Her contrasts continue as she moves her attention towards the girl who is tugging on her dress. She observes the appearance of the girl who looked,

> . . . very young . . . her bushy hair uncombed . . . She was wearing a shapeless, buttonless dress, mulberry colored, with yellow flowers, and she was barefoot . . . I was scared and shy, while she seemed fearless . . . (19)

This haptic visuality helps Nidal to compare her lifestyle with the neighbouring villages. Other than sketching the physical appearance, she observes their attitudes that despite meeting strangers, the kids seemed quite confident and fearless. On the other hand, she being a city girl was shy and scared of them. However, she quietly keeps on capturing the environment and tries her best to understand the nature of the people inhabiting this village.

Later, Nidal heads to the mountains of Asira to meet her uncle Wahid. Following a short pause there, both Nidal and her grandmother receive instructions to return to Nabulus. Along the way, they encounter the tomb of Sheikh Al-Emad, prompting her grandmother to pause for prayers. While her grandmother goes inside to pray, Nidal remains at the entrance, attempting to soak in the breathtaking view of the Nabulus cityscape:

> The sun was rising slowly, but the city of Nablus was covered with a thick fog, like a veil; it resembled fields of cotton. All we could see of the city were the surrounding mountains, the blue line of the horizon, and the striking gold sunrays as they were reflected from the white rocks and the mountaintops. (Khalifeh 48)

On their journey back to Nabulus, they are accompanied by Rabie, the boy she fell in love with at first sight. She attempts to engage in conversation with Rabie, but her efforts do not yield much, leading her to eventually leave him behind. Instead, she enters the "*maqam*" to observe her grandmother's activities. Inside, she witnesses her ". . . praying in front of a tomb covered with a piece of green cloth. A sliver of light passed through a small window in the middle of the wall. The place was engulfed by incense, humidity, and an awesome silence." (49). This sight overwhelms Nidal with "a feeling of awe", tinged with fear, and she rushes out of the maqam (49). Through this experience, Nidal seeks to emphasize how the geographical surroundings can profoundly impact an individual's psyche—either drawing them in or pushing them away. In her case, the tomb's eerie atmosphere unsettles her, driving her out to find comfort in the company of Rabie.

The melodious chirping of a goldfinch brings Nidal back to the present, triggering memories of a bird from her childhood whose song marked both dawn and dusk. Curious to find the source of the sound, she approaches the window, only to be met by a biting cold that forces her to shut it. Right at this moment, she hears "an old song playing on a distant radio in the alley. It was celebrating wealthy families, the bower, love, security, and family life." (53). This melody evokes recollections of an Egyptian movie she watched during the sixties, centered around the catastrophes of 1948 - Nakba and the events before Naksa. The tragic ending mirrored societal issues prevalent at the time, where "families were broken because of the family and the girl's honor" (54). Nidal emphasizes that this theme was deeply rooted in the society and contributed to its desolation and gloomy atmosphere.

However, a shift occurred after the defeat of 1967. The focus transitioned from tales of wealthy and respectable families to narratives dominated by the occupation, demolitions, uprooting, and the intrusive presence of bulldozers. The emphasis shifted from family honor to the devastation and struggles brought by war. Memories of prosperous households were replaced by remnants of "dilapidated, corroded house," an image mirroring Nidal's efforts to restore her house (54). Nidal aims to underscore the profound impact of war on societal narratives and the consequential shift in priorities and perspectives.

A sudden knock on the door snaps Nidal back to reality. With caution, she approaches the door and glimpses the visitor through the crack, using her keen sense of touch and sight to mentally sketch the lady's appearance, who was in,

> . . . her nightgown under a red velvet housecoat. She was holding a silver tray containing two coffee cups, a coffeepot, and Indian jasmine in a glass of water—the aroma of the coffee, the smell of the Indian jasmine, and a beautiful smile illuminating a bright face. The woman had pearly white teeth and silky hair, curled with rollers that fell over her shoulders. She said, casually and with a smile, "We are neighbors. We share the same fence. I came to greet you and congratulate you and tell you, neighbor, that you light up the house! (55)

Her sudden visit confuses Nidal but she tries to sketch a connection between her and "Habs al-Dam", an "alley of wealthy". She recalls that this alley always has someone "who remembers you, or knows something about you, your origin, where you came from, when you were born and where you were buried" (55). Nidal tells her reader that this monitoring though gives a feeling of imprisonment initially but as time passes it becomes a phase of life that represents someone's history. Therefore, she welcomes Yasmine into her house and puts effort into knowing her better.

Through her conversation with Yasmine, Nidal finds this lady is up-to-date with everything happening in and outside the neighbourhood and that this lady knows "all my secrets" (56). She knew Nidal's profession despite not seeing any of her paintings. She is "well-informed about other matters and household stories that occurred in other people homes . . ." (56). She tells Nidal about everything that happened during her absence and concludes: "Nablus was not what it used to be" (57). She tells Nidal about the young men

of “Intifada”, who settled in the basement of Nidal’s house and turned it into a “slaughter house” (57). The sudden revelation of grim activities scared Nidal but it did not stop Yasmine from pouring in more details. She continues her story that initially people used to provide them with food but when they saw these young men torturing and holding sentences, they got scared which halted any kind of communication with them. She further explains the “shouting, swearing, and the sounds of slashing and cursing” that came from this house (58). As a result, the house was raided countless times but the army could not catch the young men of intifada.

To this Elkin argues that women keep their eyes on the streets and are well aware of what is happening around them. She, while quoting David Garrioch, further adds that “in a way, the streets belonged to women” (Elkin 20). Yasmeen’s example supports this claim as she “knew everything about everybody, all the families and all the homes . . .” (Khalifeh 56). Moreover, Nidal by shedding light on Yasmine’s description of the neighbourhood activities, highlights psychogeographical impacts which left indelible marks on her psyche. Yasmine is always wary of this house and if she tries to tell anybody of any incident they think Yasmine has gone “crazy?” (59). However, this does not scare Yasmine from telling what she witnessed because she believes that she has nothing to be afraid of as she has already endured enough “Why would I be scared? I have neither Fatmeh nor Muhammad, no children to worry about and make sacrifices for.” (60).

This whole discussion creates complex emotions in Nidal’s mind towards her family home: she seems to grapple with a sense of loss, betrayal, and nostalgia mingled with pain. Her once-beloved home becomes a symbol of suspicion, guilt, and violence, where even the most familiar elements have turned into symbols of death and repression. The stark contrast between the tender memories of family life, childhood drawings, and youthful passions against the grim reality of a “slaughterhouse” filled with bones and suppressed moaning creates a powerful emotional landscape (61). Moreover, Yasmine’s description transforms the kitchen tiles, bathtub, kitchen sink, and stairs into a “burial place” (61). She finds her “neighborhood”, especially this house, “terrifying” (Elkin 32). This transformation infuses these ordinary objects with a sense of touch and physicality, though in a haunting and disturbing manner, evoking a haptic presence through the imagination and emotional touch rather than direct physical interaction.

Additionally, the recollection of the jasmine necklace, the lemon blossoms, the poppy tree, and the morning goldfinch brings forth sensory experiences associated with the urban environment. These elements evoke not just visual imagery but also the scents of jasmine and lemon, the tactile sensation of flower petals, and the sounds of the goldfinch's song. These sensory details offer a glimpse into Nidal's intimate connection with the urban landscape, though now tainted by the specter of violence and betrayal.

5.3 War, Revolution and Love

Nidal is the major character in the novel and serves the role of flâneuse. She is a painter by profession and her paintings reflect her "keen attention to the economic" and social structures of her surrounding space, such as power dynamics, war, revolution, history, and love (Simpson 47). Through her paintings, poems, and her uncle's unpublished memoirs and articles, Nidal is trying to sketch the history of Palestinians: the ongoing war and the resultant revolution and its impact on the lives of individuals. The story deftly switches between past and present and tries to capture the changes that have taken place throughout this time. She goes to her uncle Amin's room and finds it filled with journals, magazines, pamphlets, clippings of newspaper, and books. Among these, she notices some headlines that read ""The British Want to Leave," "The Investigation Committees Failed," and "The Mufti Issues a Statement from Exile, but al-Nashashibi Refutes It.", depicting the warfare situation of the 1940s (Khalifeh 23). Her description of Uncle Amin's room depicts her family's part in bringing revolution in order to put an end to the illegal occupation. While sorting out her uncle's things, Nidal's gaze falls on "—a painting of Mount Ebal and the pine forest on top of the mountain, above the quarry and Sheikh al-Emad." which restores her lost connection with the geography and the revolution embedded in it (23). She notes the painting's color gradually fading and contemplates that "the revolution was beginning to dim. But had it dimmed, or was it dying?" (23). Nidal senses a resemblance between herself and this painting, as both are gradually fading. She perceives that the struggles and the sacrifices her family had given in the name of freedom and revolution had grown dim. She worries that history might erase the name of her family who had given everything to this revolution. So, she unconsciously starts recalling past events. Thus, one

memory leads to the other and another making it a chain of all the events (minor and major) that have taken place in Nidal and her family's life.

She begins by reminiscing about her painting era, which she embarked upon with her crush, an actor Muhsin Sarhan. She tells her readers that her initial paintings were more about fantasy worlds as,

> I was a teenager . . . dreaming of a gentle and handsome young man who would grow up to be strong, who would protect me, hold my hand, and kiss me; a man who would carry me, and fly me over the Ebal and Jarzim summits; a man who would tell me that I was beautiful and innocent, and that he had come to save me from this environment of fear and tension, and my grandmother's tears. (Khalifeh 24)

However, her uncle Amin's critique pulled her back into the real world. He would question her paintings, asking "Was this art? Was this life, was this beauty, were these emotions? Art is death and revelation . . . but Muhsin Sarhan! Where is life? Where is reality? Where is history? Where is your vision?" (24). This interrogation made Nidal realize that she was simply copying what she saw and her paintings were not reflecting the reality full of miserable history which was quite vivid to the people inhabiting the same space as her. She was unaware of the impacts of war on the lives of her fellow Palestinians. As a result of this harsh critique, she stopped painting for a while because she thought her paintings were devoid of any value. However, later her uncle gifted her books about painters,

> . . . who drew reality, and drew ideas, and drew imaginary representations of heaven and hell; painters who drew the Mona Lisa, Aphrodite, Cupid, the god of love, and Jesus Christ. I lived in the company of Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Picasso. (25)

Nidal's understanding of painting took a significant turn when she grasped its essence as "reality mixed with vision and the movement of history" (25). This newfound insight inspired her to sketch her mother, grandmother, and serene scenes like "poppies and jasmine, a white cat sleeping quietly under a tree" infusing them with vibrant colors to breathe life into her art (25). Her portrayal of Mount Ebal and the pine forest emerged as pivotal moments in her life. As she witnessed the struggle of revolutionaries fighting

against oppression, a movement she describes as “It began well, strong and clean, but gradually crumbled.” (25). Each subsequent painting by Nidal reflects her keen observation of the environment and its profound impact on her artistic expression. These paintings are a haunting reminder of how her surroundings have shaped her artistry, leaving an indelible mark on her present self.

During this journey of painting infused with reality and history, Nidal comes across a boy named Rabie and falls in love with him. After meeting him, she finds herself in a “state of in-betweeness” as on one side, she devotes herself to observing and painting the life of the Palestinians and the revolution, and on the other side, is her newly discovered love for Rabie (Elkin 28). She is impacted by both these pleasant and unpleasant situations and tries to create a balance between the two by not letting any detail slip through her eyes. She describes her first encounter with the resistance between the Asira villagers and the British as she heard “sound of distant explosion” (Khalifeh 27). At this moment, Nidal notices a strange change in the behaviour of the village children as they “stood at a distance, their faces serious” and when the British plane circled Asira, they picked stones and hurled at the plane “shouting like he would at a cat, saying, “Go away, *bint al-kalb*, go away, go!”. . .” (27). This whole situation was new to Nidal and did scare her a bit but she could not find the same fear in the children. She felt that all of this “seemed like a game” to them (27). Later, Nidal and grandma sought shelter at Umme Nayef’s house and she kept her eyes on the events happening outside. She saw the planes “shelling the area close to the forest and Sheikh al-Emad” and after few moments the sounds of the plane died, indicating their departure (28). Nidal describes the aftermath of this whole scene to her readers,

> The village seemed deserted. The older men moved toward the mosque while the women returned to their homes, and the merchants closed their shops. There was not a single person in the center of the village or in front of the shops and the vegetable gardens. The village looked like a cemetery, quiet and empty. (28)

Despite being in a dreadful situation, Nidal kept on observing her environment. She knew what someone was doing whether it was a merchant or some old man going for prayer. In addition, she kept on going back and forth into the street to have a closer look at what happened and what kind of impact it left on the people. She found that,

> . . . in the dusty, dug-up street was peace and quiet; all activity had ceased following the events that had shaken up the city—the planes were gone, and a sunset wrapped the village in a magical cloud filled with shades and smells floating from the ovens, the warm manure, and the drizzle of dusty particles. The children had left behind stones piled up in small columns, and balls made of pieces of cloth. There were also the traces of their game with the cursed plane, the stones thrown at it, their running and all the dust it stirred. The place looked sad and desolate . . . (33)

Through the description of this scene, Nidal – the flânesue, highlights the fact that the horrors of war have become a part of the everyday life of the villagers. Even the children are not afraid of the attacks by the British and Israeli forces because it is not something new. They have become accustomed to these attacks. On the same night she gets the chance to visit her uncle Wahid and have a look at the life of the revolutionaries. She, in the company of Rabie, marched towards the mountain landscape to meet her uncle Wahid. She explains this journey as "We walked in the dark, the moon illuminating our way. The stones crunched under our feet, ripping through the silence. The roosters were crowing . . ." (35). Elkin while quoting Varda's views, adds, "By understanding people you understand places better, by understanding places you understand people better" (Elkin 219). That is why Nidal remains highly vigilant, carefully noting every detail within her surroundings. She observes the surroundings to understand the people and she observes the people to understand their geography because all these details help her to connect the riddles to comprehend what is to follow. During her walk towards the mountain, Nidal ponders the destination and the time needed to arrive there. Furthermore, observing Rabie's actions leads her to speculate if he might be associated with her uncle's freedom fighter group. Yet, this assumption unnerves her, knowing all too well the dangers encircling the revolutionaries.

Upon arriving at the forest, Nidal takes in the sight of the woods, "fenced with stones pulled from the surrounding soil" (Khalifeh 36). She is determined to ilustrate the lifestyle of the revolutionaries for her readers. She notes that the stone fencing gives the appearance of a farmer's territory, purposefully masking any suspicions. As she approaches, she encounters two men stationed at the entrance, adorned with the symbolic "*hatta*" and armed with guns (36). They inquire about Nidal and the others' intentions,

conducting a brief examination before granting them passage into the area. These distinct cues allow her to discern this location as the hideout of the revolutionaries. Walking along the fence, she eventually reaches a metal gate, marking a significant discovery:

> . . . surrounded by cactuses and heaps of weeds pulled out of the ground. We walked along a dusty path, between rocks and high, thick creepers. There were also oak trees, pistachio trees, bunches of grapes on the vines, and weeds. The scent of the pine trees and the *tayyoun* filled the space with a sugary smell, making the world around us seem more beautiful than in reality. (36)

Afterward, she tells her readers about a "narrow hiding place that resembled a longnecked bottle—the revolutionaries' lair" and there were "the burned and uprooted trees, piled up like a barrier among the rocks and under the oaks" which were used as shields by the freedom fighters (36). During her initial interaction with the revolutionaries, Nidal carefully catalogs their appearance: "covered their heads with white- or black-dotted *hatta*s, and wore either khaki or black uniforms" (37). Upon entering the cave, she notices,

> . . . was large and had a high ceiling. Its floor was smooth, and its walls seemed to have been sandpapered. It was probably meant to serve as a lodging, similar to a house. There was a lamp hanging from the ceiling like the ones we use to light our homes. There were mattresses piled up near the wall, a teapot, and cooking utensils, all blackened by the wood fire, and a burner with a broken head; the smell was a mixture of sage, sleep, rot, moss, and men's shoes. (37)

The morning light illuminated the cave "into a light source" and then came out Nidal's uncle Wahid, who at first seemed like a ghost wearing "his khaki uniform, his *hatta*, and a large jacket" (37). It was the first time Nidal was meeting him and this meeting made her somewhat sad because that was not how she had pictured him. She confirms that her grandma's worries were true as "he had no home, no wife, and no children" (39). She considers this lack of home and family the reason behind him living in the "wild and in this forest, in filthy surroundings, without a decent meal to eat, a comfortable bed . . ." (39). He looked old though he was in his thirties. Later, Nidal secretly hears about her uncle's worries that the English forces were hunting down the "freedom fighters everywhere. They attacked Rubin, Tulkarem, and Zanaba; they dynamited the houses and arrested hundreds"

(39). She also hears about her uncle Wahid's plan of retaliating against the English, "with his group, a military truck at Ras al-Ain, in order to reduce the pressure of the blockade on a besieged group hiding in a cave in Jabal al-Tour" and after the attack they need to "change their location and move from this forest to another" (47). Nidal emphasizes the profound psychological effects of ongoing warfare on individuals, particularly the revolutionaries. The continuous strife has stripped away their aspirations for a peaceful, comfortable life and the pursuit of familial bonds. Their singular focus revolves around securing freedom from the unjust oppression they endure. In her analysis of Gellhorn's war reporting, Elkin observes that she "often had to detach herself from her home life" and "could never stay for long in one place, she tried again and again to make homes for herself and abandoned each of them in turn" (Elkin 249). The situation of Wahid and his group members resonates with Elkin's observation. As they have to detach themselves from their families, sacrificing personal connections for the larger cause they believe in. These freedom fighters also find it difficult to settle down or create stable homes because their commitment to their cause requires constant movement and dedication to the fight for freedom.

The story shifts back to the present where Nidal's neighbor Yasmine sheds light on the ongoing confrontation between the Palestinians and Israelis. She tells Nidal that the incident took place at night,

> . . . by the mosque. They entered the alley with the harrow. Then came a huge vehicle, taller than a house. Have you ever seen it? When it passes in the street, I can see the soldier driving it, face to face; his head would be higher than the roof, which means, dear neighbor, that the vehicle is higher than the house, higher and bigger, huge. It can demolish a house. Have you ever seen such a vehicle? (Kalifeh 69)

To Yasmine's dismay, Nidal had not personally witnessed the vehicle herself; she had only seen it "on TV and in photographs in magazines and newspapers, and documentaries on Al Jazeera or in the news." (69). What Nidal is emphasizing here is that this confrontation is not a recent development. It has been ongoing for decades because there has not been a resolution to halt the illegal occupation of Palestine. "What do we see of a revolution after it's gone? A better world, perhaps. Some changes in the structure of society. But not always

– sometimes there's no change at all" (Elkin 101). This is quite evident in Nidal's effort to trace history. She tells her reader that these confrontations are an everyday part of their life. They have become accustomed to these situations and are not scared or sad anymore.

Nidal's paintings "are history" and her "connection with this life" (Khalifeh 72). Each one of her painting tell a unique tale of wandering through neighborhoods, unveiling the social and political issues deeply ingrained within those spaces. For example, one such painting depicts her wanderings through Zawata, "a small village, very small, where one would find apples, grapes, pomegranates, and a water spring—to me, at that time, it looked like a waterfall" which at presents has turned into "a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and droves of rodents and wasps" (Khalifeh 73). As it was Nidal's second visit to a village, her grandmother dressed her in attire similar to that of the villagers to avoid drawing attention, as had happened during their previous visit. When crossing the "Habs al-Dam valley", Nidal observes that this new peasant look proved to be beneficial as "neither the upholsterer, nor the grocer, nor even the baker boy paid any attention to us" (74). It also highlights Nidal's desire of "*wanting and engaging*" which she achieves by successfully assimilating into the village culture (Elkin 44). After reaching the destination Nidal takes in the layout of Zawata village that "had spread out like smallpox on top of the hill, from the west side." (Khalifeh74). True to her habit, Nidal absorbs the scene before her and vividly portrays it to her readers, capturing every detail.

> It was a warm summer day in early July, and the sun was beginning to heat up. But there was a cool breeze that came from the south, carrying the mist of the sea, while the scent of the wild herbs of the mountain was spread by the heat that dried the soft plants, changing them into hard sticks and thorns. (75)

Then a crowd of men attracts her attention who have gathered to protest against the illegal occupation of their lands, at the mayor's house. Nidal highlights the significance of these lands which are "very dear, dearer than one's life" (77). She documents the miseries inflicted upon the villagers by the Israelis and British mandate, illustrating the forceful seizure of their lands. Each piece of land is taken from the villagers and handed over to the Jews, leaving even the village mayors powerless to resist. She is unable to understand how "the land became the property of the rulers and not the ruled" (79). This situation saddened

Nidal and she tried looking for answers. Meanwhile, her gaze fell on the patch of land near the mayor's house, she saw

> . . . the tractors and the huge prongs, and the white-skinned conductors, with cloth hats on their heads, wearing shorts that hardly covered their lower bodies. Their bare backs were red, burned by the hot sun. (79)

Nidal's observations abruptly halt as noises emanate from the mayor's house, signaling the villager's demand for his presence. The discourse swiftly transitions from land concerns to issues of honor, with the community expressing their distress over the impact of the Jewish presence on their dignity. Nidal, attuned to every detail, absorbs these conversations, not letting a single word escape her attention. Voices among the crowd expressed their grievances, condemning the Jews for their attire, mentioning how they walked around in shorts, exposing their backs and thighs to women and young girls as an act "not acceptable to God or to us or even to his honor the mayor" (Khalifeh 80). Another voice raised concern "The naked people from Europe came and took the land, uprooted the trees, and drank the water, while we remained without land, without water, and without a way to protect the honor of our women. Did the honorable mayor approve of this?" (81). Nidal's description of these narratives, coupled with her acute observation, showcases her deep awareness and understanding of the issues entrenched in her surroundings. It also depicts her keen desire to know the people and their corresponding geography.

Amidst her act of flâneusing, a sudden outcry from the elderly man redirected Nidal's focus to a patch of land where she previously observed men seemingly tending to the earth with a tractor. Contrary to her initial assumption, it unfolded that these men were uprooting the olive trees. This revelation added intensity to the ongoing conflict between the villagers and the mayor's faction, intensifying Nidal's apprehension. However, Rabie appeared at this tense moment, evoking within her "feelings of fear, surprise, and longing" (83). Their encounter did not align with her envisioned reunion; instead, she stood frozen, tears streaming down her face, and her mouth wide open" (83). Urging them to leave swiftly, Rabie remarked, "It's cloudy and it might rain", a phrase that resonated deeply with Nidal, hinting at the escalating tensions between revolutionaries, peasants, and the mayor's allies (83). This situation stirred fear in Nidal as it was the first time she

experienced this level of destruction unfolding before her eyes. Desperation and fear gripped her as she urged her grandmother to flee. Observing the escalating violence from an alley, she witnessed a harrowing scene:

> . . . people pushing each other and one of the guards was beating a man on the head with his rifle, while another was shooting into the air to scare the people. Then we heard a loud explosion from the south and saw one of the tractors fly high in the air and fall, in pieces, down to the bottom of the valley. (Khalifeh 85)

As chaos enveloped them and the second explosion reverberated in the valley, panic ensued and people scattered in frantic haste. Even in situations of life and death, Nidal does not let details slip from her mind. This keen attention is her way of meticulously tracing history for future generations, ensuring that the sacrifices of the people are not in vain.

Later, she describes their escape through the path beside the mountain where a young man covering his face, waited for them. He pointed toward the direction of the cave where they were supposed to seek shelter. She captures their journey as they traverse "between the rocks and under the trees until we reached the caves of the quarry and the piles of pebbles, sand, and chunks of rock." (86). It is here that she spots her uncle stationed at the cave entrance, accompanied by a cadre of revolutionaries. She keenly observes the toll of their circumstances on her uncle, discerning the tremble in his voice as he inquires about their visit and warmly embraces them. Following this, Nidal concludes the war episode with the echoing sounds of planes traversing over the "Zawata and the mountaintops" (86). They sought refuge in the cave, intending to observe, listen, and comprehend the unfolding events of the operation: Zawata's fate, the mayor's situation, and the status of both the revolution and its proponents.

After this horrific scene, Nidal calms her emotions and continues her observation of the surroundings. She adds that observing this conflict expanded her worldview and comprehension of her surroundings. As prior to this incident, she and her grandmother possessed a superficial understanding of the revolutionaries, viewing them as outsiders, believing in an idealized image: "revolution was a group of well-behaved guerilla fighters, who believed in the struggle for God's sake, and in the protection of people's rights" (87). Their knowledge revolved solely around the valor of the revolutionaries, oblivious of the

infiltrators hidden within their revolution. Nidal acknowledges her detachment from reality, admitting, “were not in touch with reality; we were living on the sidelines.” (88). Speaking on behalf of common folk, Nidal reflects that for them, the concept of revolution resembled a romantic narrative, painting landscapes like “caves, forests, and mountaintops” as picturesque backdrops, adding an alluring effect to the notion of revolution and its fighters (88). Yet, she stresses the necessity for a deeper understanding, beyond the physical tools of a “gun, a box of explosives, and God fearing people” advocating for multifaceted strategies and perspectives to enact substantial change or liberation (88).

On her visit to Sanour, she observes the “Jewish settlement was getting closer” (178). Therefore, her uncles decided that “It is the time to deal with the Jewish settlement that advances ten meters every day. It is the time to debate matters with the village council and the peasants . . .” because if it is not fenced timely than “The British would take the communal land and claim it was government property”. . . “And the government would then give it to the Jews.” (182). After shedding light on this issue, Nidal brings forth the reason behind this unlawful invasion that Palestine is “rich in metals and minerals. Our region is filled with black gold, gas, and has the Suez Canal” (184). Due to these resources, the British promised this land to the Jews and the only solution to stop this encroachment was to fence the remaining land. Despite the lack of resources and money, Nidal’s uncle Wahid initiated the fencing process with the help of his tractor: He moved “with his beautiful tractor between the farms of the village and the vegetable gardens, like a butterfly over a field of flowers. He extracted the rocks from under the soil and carried them from their location in the blink of an eye. He would pile them in mounds of equal height, in the shape of small pyramids all around the communal land” (192). Meanwhile Uncle Amin gathered some young people who “formed groups to take turns building the stone fence and patrolling” (192).

After the completion of the fence, Nidal observes a strange sense of satisfaction and happiness on the faces of everybody but this happiness could not last long as two days later we woke up to “shouting of the villagers” accompanied by an unfamiliar smoky scent (196). Stepping outside, we witnessed a burning tractor, “Parts of the stone wall had collapsed, and the green grass looked as if it had been mowed with thousands of tractors.

The roots were visible on the ground, the red earth smashed under the chains of the tanks, and there was no sign of the patrolling youth." (196). This incident plunged the villagers into a deep sense of despair. Nidal's uncle convened a meeting in an attempt to address this act of brutality. During the gathering, Nidal overhears the mayor attributing this destruction to the British, claiming that such actions were typical of them. He recounts how "they demolished houses, broke jars, turned pots upside down, burned the wheat, and did not leave a single green stem in the fields and the village" (196).

Beyond the immediate physical devastation, Nidal expands her analysis to encompass a larger landscape of turmoil, resonating with her uncle's concerns. She concludes that the revolution's progress is failing due to a prevailing sense of despair and hopelessness among the people. Her uncle's description of the situation, highlighting "confusion, destruction, and people were being hanged", paints a bleak picture (201). Moreover, their journey to Damascus in pursuit of support from Arab allies yields only disappointment and a profound sense of defeat, "akin to the loss of Palestine" (201). Nidal, drawing from her uncle Amin's perspective, reflects on how this experience has left them disheartened. They have come to the sobering realization that defeat, the loss of their country, and the profound disappointment of the people are inevitable outcomes.

The next day, Nidal presents another gruesome picture of destruction caused by the Jewish and British armies. She observes the Jews arriving in broad daylight on tanks, smashing and crushing what remained of the fence. Witnessing this relentless act, the people of Sanour reached their limit. They could not bear to watch any longer and decided to take action. They marched towards the communal land, armed with axes and sticks, seeing it as the only remaining means to reclaim their rightful territory. However, their movement halts abruptly as they witness a distressing scene: "the young men of the night patrol tied with ropes and chains to the fronts of the tanks" (203). Behind them, units of settlers were advancing, armed, and carrying materials like weapons, fences, and floodlights. The tanks destroyed what little remained of a stone wall, while the settlers proceeded to fence off the communal land and set up observation towers with floodlights, indicating a clear intention to secure and control the area. Nidal while sketching the history presents before her readers, a picture of forceful occupation and control by the settlers, using both physical force and infrastructure to take over the communal land. The image of

the young men of the patrol being tied to the tanks suggests a form of intimidation or coercion used against those who might resist the takeover.

Nidal paints a harrowing picture of the people of Sanour who have not only witnessed the takeover of their land but also saw their children tied to tanks “who looked pale, their half-naked chests revealing traces of torture, while their faces showed traces of slapping” (204). They felt utterly powerless in the face of the aggressive actions of the settlers, “watching their children being crucified like Roman slaves” (204). Through the comparison of Roman slaves being crucified, Nidal highlights the extreme suffering and helplessness felt by the villagers. Their expressions of distress and prayers reflect their deep concern not only for their children but also for the safety of the village, their possessions, and their livelihoods. Nidal tries her best to illustrate the overwhelming anguish and powerlessness experienced by the villagers in the face of a forceful and unjust seizure of their land.

The situation turned worse as villagers killed the Jewish guards. Meanwhile, her uncles and Hasna decided to join “holy jihad and al-Husseini” in Jerusalem, and Nidal and Grandma left for Nabulus (207). As they departed, Nidal looked back at their familiar landscape, filled with lilies, olive trees, and cherished memories. However, the sight that greets them is unsettling—the southern settlement is described as being lit up like a flame, depicting the heightened state of tension, conflict, or violence in the village that was once their home. The juxtaposition of bidding farewell to the serene landscape while witnessing the unsettling sight of the illuminated settlement adds a layer of contrast, hinting at the turbulence and uncertainty that lies ahead in their journey and the situation they are leaving behind.

As she reaches Nabulus, she hears the news about Sanour on the radio which “was bombarded from the land and the sky, and there were dead and wounded and many arrests” (208). However, the fate of the young men on the patrol remains uncertain. Nidal’s grandma sees these tragic events as ominous signs, foreshadowing impending misfortune. Shortly after, the “United Nations announced the partition plan” which drastically altered the future landscape (208). The partition plan leads to a shift in focus for Nidal and her family, marking the beginning of a war and a period of strikes, division, and conflict. Even

after returning many years later, Nidal finds the same situation “I can hear the sound of bullets being fired. We have now passed the year 2000 but we still live in the era of siege. It was them yesterday, and it is us today” (385). Memories of Yasmine’s stories, the hardships faced, curfews, and closures linger as she sifts through memories in their uncle’s room, surrounded by photographs and forgotten papers, hoping for a brighter future in the Qahtan house. She tells her readers that “this is history, these experiences and documents” (235). In an effort to trace the history, Nidal beautifully sketches these marks of violence, political upheaval, and the unsettling impact of external events on the lives of the Palestinians.

5.3.1 Love

In her exploration of various neighborhoods and the backdrop of the revolution, Nidal encountered Rabie, the love of her life. However, their union was hindered by the war and ensuing revolution. She reminisces about meeting him in “Sanour and the meadow of lilies,” after which he became a profound muse for her paintings (Khalifeh 91). His presence transformed her perception, allowing her to see beauty despite the war’s sadness and misery but both viewed love differently. She perceived love as beauty and warmth, while Rabie believed the revolution superseded love. In her mind, Rabie’s views were foreshadowing the grim impacts of revolution; it separated the revolutionaries from their loved ones. Nonetheless, she harbored no desire for a similar fate. This divergence troubled her deeply, especially witnessing Uncle Wahid “settling down and getting married”, forsaking the struggles for freedom (96). This internal conflict left her “saturated with in-betweeness”, for her love for Rabie and her deep admiration for Uncle Wahid (Elkin 28).

Rabie expresses to Nidal that with Uncle Wahid’s altered plans, he sees no future for himself in their current situation. Nidal tries to decipher his words, gazing at the distant trees, seeking solace by looking at the “gray horse and its foal suckling; the mother was grazing peacefully, turning her long neck toward her young foal, as if she was blessing it and smiling at it.” (Khalifeh 98). Despite the beauty of the scene, she feels no compulsion to capture it in art. This beautiful moment, symbolizing hope, motherhood, and the future, evokes envy within her. She explains that her inspiration for painting was rooted in her love for Rabie, and as that “love was collapsing” and the “hope for the future” was lost and

so was her desire to capture such moments (98). Nidal's experience highlights the devastating impacts of war on Palestinians. Their lives aredisrupted by constant resistance against occupation or resignation to it, both paths leading to suffering for them and their loved ones. Rabie's choice reveals the painful truth that staying in the revolution means abandoning his love. Nidal's own experiences underscore the painful reality that choosing one path often results in the loss of another, marking the end of their relationship.

In vivid detail, Nidal describes the haptic experience of seeing Rabie cry, feeling his tears on her palm as he silently dries them. She perceives his vulnerability, feeling their shared sense of confusion and lost purpose in life's harshness. She promises to stand by his side like Uncle Wahid's beloved "Hasna". However, Rabie diminishes her words as an emotional response emphasizing that the reality is quite grim. He points out their suffering, the perpetual trauma, and the lack of prospects for "People like me have no way out—no money, no land, no work, and no future. What do I have to give you?" (102). Rabie, feeling he has nothing to offer, bleakly asserts that a wanderer like him cannot ask the woman he loves to wait, for he lacks a life or a future, feeling utterly insignificant. While describing this haptic experience she does not leave out a single detail.

Nidal puts all her emotion into describing this heartbreak so that her readers can feel the pain she felt.

> I was crying, torn and ripped apart, listening to him talking the way he did. The world had collapsed around me and I had no hope left in life. I felt that all those I loved had forsaken me. He had entered my heart and dominated my feelings. His love had set roots in my soul and my being. He taught me how to love. I saw the spring, the fields of wheat, and my paintings in the green of his eyes. Now he was leaving me without hope, without dreams, and without a future. What was the meaning of life without dreams and without a future? (103)

The heartfelt final farewell between the young lovers remains deeply etched in Nidal's memory as she recalls, "He kissed my hand a second and a third time, then my forehead. "You won't forget me?" he asked as he was leaving", to which she replied "like in a Jerusalem prayer, "How could I forget you? You are my spring" (104). With the end of her love, Nidal portrays a stark contrast between the lives of ordinary Palestinians and that of

a freedom fighter, as seen through Rabie. She reveals the struggle of a fighter aging prematurely, devoid of the simple joys of life—no schooling, no stable home. Through Rabie's story, Nidal illuminates the profound impact of Palestine's illegal occupation on its people. These fighters, once ordinary individuals, were compelled by atrocities to become protectors, forsaking their homes and loved ones to fight for a liberated Palestine.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of Nidal's journey in the novel reveals her transformation into a contemporary flâneuse, distinct from the traditional Baudelarian notion. Nidal's engagement with her urban environment transcends detached observation, as she emotionally intertwines with the cityscape, exploring its memories and confronting its haunting transformations. Unlike the flâneur, who strolls aimlessly through the city's maze-like alleys with a sense of detachment, Nidal delves into the emotional and historical layers of her surroundings. She merges her family's history with the city's landscape, infusing spaces with personal significance and transforming them into meaningful places. Furthermore, Nidal's awareness of being the object of the male gaze does not hinder her wandering; instead, she embraces Varda's notion "I am looked at, but I can also look" (Elkin 243). Through her introspective journey, Nidal highlights that the act of flânerie is not limited by age or profession but is rooted in emotional and conscious engagement with one's geographical surroundings. In contrast, the Baudelarian notion of the flâneur portrays a detached observer who wanders through the city's streets, observing its charms and frightful delights while resisting the pressures of capitalist society. However, Baudelaire's conception of the flâneur excludes women, relegating them to questionable roles like prostitutes and imposing limitations on their mobility and agency within urban spaces.

Through Nidal's narrative, we witness the transformation of the traditional notion of flâneuse into the contemporary flâneuse, who engages with her environment on an emotional and intellectual level, infusing it with personal meaning and challenging societal norms. Her exploration of urban spaces reflects a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between people and places, highlighting the transformative power of conscious observation and emotional engagement. Moreover, Nidal's journey underscores the notion that flânerie is not solely about aimless wandering but also about actively

engaging with and interrogating one's surroundings. Her keen observation of the urban landscape, coupled with her introspective reflections, reveals the complexity of navigating city spaces as a woman in contrast to the traditional portrayal of the flâneuse. Additionally, Nidal's ability to infuse her paintings with the realities of her environment speaks to the transformative potential of art in capturing and conveying lived experiences. Her artworks serve as powerful expressions of her emotional and intellectual engagement with her surroundings, challenging conventional narratives and shedding light on overlooked aspects of urban life.

In essence, Nidal's journey epitomizes the evolution of the traditional flâneuse into the contemporary flâneuse—a figure who not only observes but actively participates in shaping and interpreting the urban landscape. Her story serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of flânerie as a mode of exploration and expression, transcending gendered expectations and inviting us to reimagine our relationship with the cities we inhabit.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In my research, I have delved into the exploration of female flânerie and its effects within the context of Palestinian novels. The focus has been on analyzing how women journey through neighborhoods and cityscapes, uncovering their intimate experiences within urban spaces and navigating the intricate spatial politics embedded within. To understand the act of female flânerie, I have employed Elkin's concept of 'Flâneuserie' or 'female walking.' This framework has been instrumental, allowing me to dissect how women engage in this urban exploration and the profound impacts that the geographical landscape has on their experiences. It served as a crucial tool in unraveling the complexities of female wandering and uncovering the unique dynamics between women and the urban environment.

6.1 Findings

The female flâneuse, as depicted in the novels, possesses the ability to intricately observe her surroundings regardless of her personal experiences. Her keen eye captures vivid details, painting a refined and comprehensive picture of the diverse elements encompassing her environment. From bustling markets to the subtle nuances of landscapes, caves, conflicts, and even the unnoticed moments like a midday siesta, her astute observations reveal a world that often goes unseen. The flâneuse, fueled by a profound yearning to connect with her surroundings, embarks on a journey through diverse geographies with an inherent intent to engage and comprehend. Both novels' flâneuses intricately sketch the landscapes they traverse, infusing their explorations with raw emotions that breathe life into their descriptions. This emotional depth invites readers to perceive these places through the lens of the flâneuses, experiencing the palpable emotions they navigate during their wanderings. The flâneuse often feels caught in a state of in-betweeness because of how the places she explores affect her. But she is determined to share these feelings with her readers, staying committed even when faced with challenges. Her goal is not just to find her own sense of belongingness but also to help others feel

connected. Despite difficulties, she keeps on wandering, meeting both the present and the traces of the past, an important part of her exploration.

Moreover, the flâneuse possesses a remarkable gift for storytelling. Her narratives, describing places, people, forests, wars, revolutions, and emotions, feel incredibly genuine, leaving no doubt in the reader's mind. This talent highlights her deep longing for acceptance within these landscapes and among their inhabitants. As highlighted through the analysis, the flâneuses, Jinin and Nidal, skillfully depict the struggles of ordinary individuals, shedding light on the lives of exiled people, the oppression they face in their homelands, their fight for freedom, the loss of their identities, and the painful history of atrocities committed against them. Through their narratives, these flâneuses paint a vivid picture of the challenges faced by exiled Palestinians, grappling with displacement and the gradual fading of their cultural and personal identities from their native lands. The detailed portrayals in form of paintings and writings by these flâneuses emphasize the profound struggles and resilience of these marginalized communities, as they strive to reclaim their identity and rekindle a sense of belonging amidst adversity.

The flâneuses also delve into the social issues entrenched in their surroundings. Jinin's portrayal of 'The Arabs Honor Laundry' starkly unveils the harsh realities faced by women, revealing the tragic consequences of honor killings. In their wanderings, these flâneuses grapple with a stirring mix of loss, betrayal, and nostalgia deeply intertwined with pain. For instance, Nidal's cherished home transforms into a haunting symbol of suspicion, guilt, and violence. The familiar elements now echo with death and repression, juxtaposed against her tender memories of family life and youthful passions. This stark contrast, vividly depicted by the flâneuse, infuses ordinary objects with an emotive depth, evoking a tangible presence through imagination and emotional resonance rather than mere physical interaction. Furthermore, the vivid recollection of sensory details does not merely paint visual images but also brings forth the fragrances of jasmine and lemon, the touch of flower petals, and the melodic tunes of the goldfinch's song. These sensory nuances provide a window into the flâneuse's profound and intimate bond with the urban landscape, inviting readers to experience the environment through her heightened senses.

The impact of a place or geography on an individual's psyche can have diverse effects, drawing either positive or negative responses, attracting or repelling their attention. Take, for instance, the flâneuse Julie, whose keen observations led her to imitate the customs and rituals of a mosque. Her actions in the mosque signify her longing for involvement and connection, adapting to the customs as a way of belonging to the surrounding geography. These psychogeographic influences profoundly shape Julie's emotions, leading her to construct a world existing solely in her imagination—an avenue where she feels a sense of belongingness that echoes her lost Palestinian identity. The geography exerts a powerful force, either drawing Julie in or pushing her away, evoking intense emotions as she yearns for acceptance within the *Walls of Acre*. Her strong desire to engage with the people and the territory is evident through her actions, symbolized by her intent observation and absorption of details within the cities she explores. Her act of "sniffing the walls of Acre" and pausing in Jaffa "to savor the salt of the sea" portrays her insatiable curiosity and longing for deeper exploration. Thus, Julie's relentless craving to delve further into Acre's depths reflects her endeavor to rekindle the lost connection to her sense of place—a tie severed when she departed Acre as a mere two-month-old baby, yet vividly preserved in her mind.

Jinin, the flâneuse, sheds light on the profound psychogeographic impacts of Jaffa on her married life, illustrating starkly different experiences between herself and her husband. For Jinin, Jaffa embodies a space where she seeks liberation from oppression and endeavors to assist the oppressed. However, her husband's perception diverges significantly, as Jaffa becomes a site of rejection and loss of identity—a place where he feels like an outsider in his own homeland. Jaffa's oppressive atmosphere leads Jinin's husband to perceive himself as an "untouchable" stripped of his right to live a normal life and estranged from his identity. His return to Palestine, specifically Jaffa, should have been a homecoming, yet it turned into a heartbreaking form of reverse exile, devoid of the warmth of acceptance and instead laden with feelings of imprisonment and loneliness. Despite Jinin's efforts to foster a connection and help her husband find a sense of place, the overwhelming rejection imposed by the Israeli system on the territory leaves him adrift and lost. The rejection becomes deeply ingrained, leaving her husband feeling like an "absent absentee" existing only in government records while remaining dispossessed of a

true sense of belongingness. The uncertainty and fragility of his existence in this landscape, where his presence feels precarious and easily erasable, encapsulate the poignant struggle he faces in reclaiming his identity and sense of placeness within Jaffa.

Nidal, the flâneuse, engages with the cityscape on a deeply emotional level, navigating memories and facing a hauntingly transformed environment. Her introspective journey through the neighborhoods reveals a profound emotional connection. Her observations encompass not just the physical aspects of the city but also its emotional and historical depths. Despite being the object of men's gaze, Nidal embraces the ability to observe and be observed, echoing Varda's notion, "I am looked at, but I can also look". She also highlights the ravages of war and revolution that shattered her only love. In doing so, she contrasts the lives of ordinary Palestinians with that of a freedom fighter, exposing the struggles of fighters forced into premature aging, devoid of basic joys like education or a stable home. These fighters, once everyday people, were compelled by atrocities to become guardians, sacrificing their homes and families for a liberated Palestine. Nidal unveils the profound impact of Palestine's illegal occupation on its people. Thus, Julie, Jinin and Nidal's character exemplify that there are no boundaries of age or profession when it comes to practicing flânerie. Any woman, when emotionally and consciously connected to her geographical surroundings, possessing the ability to capture and convey its essence, can embody the spirit of the flâneuse.

Moreover, it is observed that the flâneur regards the flâneuse with an air of fascination and allure, perceiving her as a figure wrapped in mystery. She is depicted as possessing a charm that can captivate or even wield a subtle power to influence or manipulate. This portrayal portrays the flâneuse as simultaneously alluring and intimidating to the flâneur. In the narrative, once she enters the same domain as the flâneur, her visibility becomes evident. However, she adapts to being observed without allowing it to hinder her exploration. She maintains her focus on her objectives despite the attention directed at her. Furthermore, the flâneuse's technique goes beyond personal perceptions of the city; it delves into a profound understanding of the lives inhabiting her urban landscape. Her narratives intricately navigate societal complexities, shedding light on issues like violence against women, struggles with identity, marginalization, and the quest for a sense of belongingness. Through her writing, she skillfully unveils these layers of society,

portraying the city as a multifaceted entity. Her acute attention to detail vividly captures the essence of the cityscape within her storytelling, immortalizing its intricacies and diverse experiences. Inspired by these observations, the flâneuse meticulously documents these moments in her stories, eternally preserving the city's nuances and the myriad experiences found within it.

6.2 Future Recommendations

The study suggests potential avenues for future research, particularly in exploring Elkin's concept of female walking. There's ample room for investigating the psychogeographical impacts experienced by women as they navigate public spaces. Additionally, there is a wealth of opportunity to delve into the portrayal of flânerie in South Asian and Middle Eastern literature. Future researchers can utilize Elkin's concept as a foundation to analyze the evolving role of the flâneuse—a figure intricately connected both physically and emotionally to the geography and history she traverses. Moreover, there is potential for further exploration into the diverse roles of women—be it as mothers, daughters, wives, teachers, or shoppers—as they navigate urban territories. Future scholars are also encouraged to explore the concept of flâneuse, emphasizing cultural and religious factors to draw more diverse conclusions and deeper understanding of the chosen texts. This deeper analysis will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the works of Palestinian writers, shedding greater light on their complexities and contributions within the literary landscape.

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