The Continuity of Identity in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin

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Abstract

Identity has been central in diasporic Palestinian literature since the Palestinian *Nakba* in 1948. However, the concept of continuity in personal identity remains in the shadow in scholarly works. Based on the significance of the interplay of personal identity's social, psychological, and physical continuity and the lack of focus on this triangulated perspective of identity in previous studies of Palestinian literature, this paper explores personal identity's social, psychological and physical continuity as depicted in the novel *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa, a Palestinian diasporic writer. With a particular focus on Abulhawa's perception of personal identity, the current study examines the juxtaposed projections of personal identity for Palestinians after the *Nakba*. The dialectics of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, by Georg Hegel, guide the discussion of the triangulated continuities of personal identity. Our findings disclose that Abulhawa manifests a continuation of the ancestors' thesis; solidity and continuity are projected before *Nakba*. As a result of the Palestinians' disconnection from their homeland, the physical continuity is crushed. *Shatat* is becoming increasingly psychologically and socially antithetical to Palestinian personal identity as the Palestinians get deeper into *Shatat*. Attempts to assimilate with American culture are projected as the most aggravated antithesis of crushed psychological and social continuity in the United States. Furthermore, commitment to nonaggression, regardless of the intensity of conflicts, appears as a vital thread keeping a sense of interrelated psychological continuity to humankind. Therefore, the synthesis of personal identity is unreachable due to the still ongoing *Shatat*.

Keywords: Susan Abulhawa; Mornings in Jenin, Hegelian dialectics, personal identity, Palestinian diaspora, Shatat

1. Introduction

Defining Palestinian literature, which is the type of literature produced by Palestinian and/or ascendants of Palestinian regardless of the used language, remained problematic after the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe) in 1948. This problem is boosted by the ambiguity to define Palestinian territory(ies) (Elad-buskila, 1999; Shamallakh et al., 2021). The *Nakba*, resulted in distorting the Palestinians' previously defined identity(ies): "In the case of Palestinian identity, we need to ask ourselves who is a Palestinian, or where is Palestine?" (Singh, 2019, p. 318). Nonetheless the quest of identity is addressed in the Palestinian literature. Mahmud Darwish's poetry, in Arabic, succeeded in conveying the deepest feelings of the Palestinian people, as well as capturing the essence of the Palestinian identity and its closeness to the occupied territory of Palestine (Ahmed et al., 2012). Additionally, Ghassan Kanafani's عائد الى حيفا "*Return to Haifa*" depicted the act of fleeing home to find peace elsewhere, where refugees remain identified as silenced and marginalized (Waleed & Muhaidat, 2017). Moreover, Emel Habibi's novelالمتشائل *Al-Mutashael* is a quest to restore identity (El-hussari, 2016). In the same context, Susan Abulhawa's novel *Morning in Jenin* comes to project a multidisciplinary perspective. Accordingly, Al-Ma'amari et al. (2013) stated that national identity is portrayed through the narration of the struggles of daily life, resistance, and misery of the Palestinian people.

The scholarly works on Susan Abulhawa's (2010) novel *Morning in Jenin* stress the importance of the concept of 'identity' in diasporic Palestinian literature. However, they did not address the continuity of personal identity. Continuity of personal identity is a multisectoral concept that is inclusive to physical, psychological, and social continuum(s). For instance, Aljahdali (2014) focused on discovering historical and geographical factors. Al-Ma'amari et al. (2013) highlighted how the narration of daily life, resistance, and misery contributed to national identity. Nachida (2017) based her study on the psychological perspectives of traumatized identity in Abulhawa's work.

A multidimensional perspective on the continuity of personal identity has yet to be explored in the diasporic Palestinian literature. The need to conceptualize identity in this multidimensional perspective stems from Ashcroft's et al. (2007) idea that people's dislocation from their original home results in changes in their identity. We can say that dislocation breaks the already established continuity from one side and starts a new continuity from the other. Such changing homes and continuity (as a construct of social, psychological, and physical personal identity) are central to identity formation. Susan Abulhawa's novel *Morning in Jenin* offers an unearthed opportunity to investigate continuity of personal identity from a multidimensional viewpoint.

The current work attempts to depict the different manifestations of personal identity as demonstrated in Susan Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin*; thus, integrating personal identity's continuity with Georg W.F. Hegel dialectical approach (Baldwin & Preti, 2011; Beiser, 2005).

This study departs from previous scholarship by investigating identity from a multidimensional (psychological, physical, and social) perspective in diasporic Palestinian literature. This study would provide better insights into identity for Palestinians in *Shata* (equivalent to dispersal and separation from the homeland) and how the break of continuity, at the home of origin, is reflected on personal identity by comparing the three generations (presented in the novel) in exile. The foundations of such conceptualization can be traced in previous related scholarly works as discussed in the following section, to encompass the continuity of personal identity on various levels such as social, physical, and psychological.

1.1 The Selected Work: Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin

Mornings in Jenin is a piece of diasporic Palestinian literature that emphasized the concept of personal identity. The value of the novel stems from two factors: the first is that it is among the very few novels that detail the most significant turning points in the Palestinians' socio-political life as *Nakba*, the 1967 war, the Israeli incursion into Lebanon, and the Oslo Accords. Additionally, the novel builds on Ghassan Kanafani's (1963) رجال في الشمس *Men in the Sun* narrative. In an interview with Abulhawa (2015), the author declared that *Mornings in Jenin* is the continuation of Kanafani's narrative. The second point is that according to Amazon.com (2025), Abulhawa's work was translated into 28 different languages and sold the most internationally. No Palestinian novelist, either in Arabic or in English, reached such a level of publicity and popularity as Abulhawa.

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian American writer and political activist born in 1970. Abulhawa's parents, originally from At-Tur in Jerusalem, were refugees of the 1967 war. Her father was forcefully expelled at gunpoint. Before moving to Kuwait, her family moved to Jordan, where Abulhawa was born in 1970 and finally migrated to the United States. Abulhawa wrote her first novel, "*Mornings in Jenin*," or the "Scarf of David," in 2010. Alongside her literary career, she is a social and political advocator for the Palestinian cause.

Mornings in Jenin is a multi-generational story about a Palestinian family (Abulhejos) whom the Zionist Gangs forcibly displaced from the village of Ein Hod to live in canvas tents in the Jenin refugee camp in 1948. The novel's narrator, Amal, depicts the story of her two brothers. Ismail is kidnapped and raised as Jewish, and Yousef is accused of a suicide bombing in the US embassy in Lebanon. Still, Amal's own story is not less important. She tells a tale of romance and loss, childhood, marriage, motherhood, and finally of the necessity to share her past with her daughter to hold onto the most incredible love she has ever known. Amal's life is a story of history, identity, friendship, love, terrorism, surrender, courage, and hope set against one of the most unresolvable political conflicts of the twentieth century.

In the next sections, we explain the theory and method employed in this study, respectively. The theoretical foundation of the current work is based on the fact that being diasporic is the opposite and a negation of being at home (Cohen, 2008). That is, displacement stops the original progress of continuity of personal identity and forces new channel(s) of continuity(ies). Additionally, investigating identity within a diasporic context is the investigation of an idea within its opposing context. Therefore, Georg Hegel's philosophy of dialectics with its contradicting thesis and antithesis is employed.

2. Theoretical Construct: Personal Identity, a Multi-Sectoral Continuity

John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the early scholars to discuss personal identity. For Locke, personal identity has much to do with consciousness (Uzgalis, 2007). Within the lengthy discussions and arguments of Locke's ideas comes a question about identifying an individual as the same individual over time. Noonan (2019) declared that "The problem of personal identity over time is the problem of giving an account of the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person identified at one time being the same person as a person identified at another" (p. 12). Generally speaking, Drummond, (2020) said that personal identity is about the sameness of a person over time. Nimbalkar (2011) pointed out that John Locke's account of personal identity is about the psychological continuity of man's consciousness.

Continuity stresses Noonan's (2019) idea of "evidence for personal identity" (p. 12). What is the evidence that a person is identified as the same person at two different times? An essential prerequisite for abstraction, thinking, or believing is the need for a confirmed existence. The soundest proof to assure existence is the physicality of our being, which is represented in our bodies. Consequently, the starting point for man to define himself is the human body's physicality. Almost for anyone, the initial idea about personal identity is that personal identity has to comprise bodily identity. This point is the main focus of personal identity's bodily criterion. This viewpoint bases its identity argument on the sameness of materialistic components (Noonan, 2019; Sider, 2001). Otsuka (2018) pointed out that continuity is mainly found in man's memories and life experiences. Such experiences are mainly stored in man's brain. Another viewpoint of personal identity is more likely to be constructed by other abstract factors. According to Locke (Uzgalis, 2007), the most important thing about personal identity is memory. Based on Locke's view, the personal identity construct is confined to an individual's memory. Locke's idea is supported by the fact that memory is central to shaping our awareness during our life (Nichols, 2017).

To this end, continuity is the most agreed point while discussing personal identity. However, disagreement starts to arise when trying to tell the continuity of what? Is it the continuity of the concrete constructs as the body or brain, or is it the continuity of the abstracted constructs as memory and psychology? McDowell (1997), McMahan (2002), and Campbell (2015) agreed that continuity is found in the hybrid approach that synthesizes bodily and memory criteria. Within the hybrid viewpoint, physical continuity can be traced and understood as central to psychological continuity. Along with the hybrid understanding of personal identity, Baghdadi (2015) asserted that personal identity provides a self-definition for an individual that includes name, characteristics (physical and psychological), behavior, and referential affiliation. Personal identity is based on social introspection as it arises from an interaction between

psychological mechanisms and social factors. While talking about personal identity, Baghdadi (2015) maintained the idea of continuity as a milestone in personal identity and is analogous to the hybrid approach to personal identity. Still, Baghdadi (2015) expanded continuity from being condensed into concrete and abstract continuity to including social continuity.

In sum, a complete conceptualization of personal identity would be one that is multidimensional, encompassing physical, psychological, and social continuity. The physical continuity serves and builds on man's first starting point of existence. Still, this physical continuity does not encompass the intangible continuities (psychological and social). Social and psychological continuity must be included to complete the personal identity triangulation. Psychological continuity invests in man's life experiences over time, thus, creating a chain of memories and psychological connectedness that are enough for man to recognize himself as the same person across his life. A considerable part of man's memory and experience are associated with surrounding societies and communities; accordingly, man's social stability is essential in stabilizing the abstract component of personal identity's continuity. Based on the above understanding of personal identity's continuity as physical, psychological, and social, this conceptualization will be employed in studying the three generations in *Mornings of Jenin*. The analysis will depict the three generations of *Shatat* respectively. This approach will introduce the continuity of personal identity before, during and after *Nakba.*

3. Methodological Framework: Hegel's Dialectical Approach

In the 19th century, Georg W.F. Hegel had a significant role in the Enlightenment Age as a philosopher. Among Hegel's enduring contributions are his way of thinking and inquiry, as argued by Beiser (2005) and Baldwin and Preti (2011). Dialectic philosophy is his approach to philosophy. Considering the contrast and opposition between sides and ideas in Hegel's philosophy of dialectics, Baldwin and Preti (2011) claimed Hegel constructed his ideas and arguments based on contradictions. Contradictions and negations are the driving forces of change, according to Hegel (Beiser, 2005). In order to achieve progress, improvement, and change, evoked movements are thought to be the primary catalyst. Hegel regarded negatives as the fundamental dialectical element in contradictions within this context (Baldwin & Preti, 2011).

Dialectically, Hegel moved from thesis to antithesis and synthesis in a triangulated relationship (Schnitker & Emmons, 2013). The thesis is the initial starting point; then, this thesis is opposed, negated, and/or contradicted by its opposite, the antithesis. The continuing opposition between thesis and antithesis is synchronized into the synthesis. Hegel's dialectical method implies self-evoked movement where the initial and primary ideas, notions, and/or actions (thesis) stimulate its essential limitation. At this stage, when such limitations are uncovered, it becomes inevitable to have the opposing negation (antithesis). The debate and clash continue between the thesis and antithesis until such a conflict reaches a common ground that consolidates the former two opposing ideas. This stage is called synthesis. The Hegelian dialectical philosophy attempts to clarify humankind's progress toward a better condition (Mueller, 1958; Popper, 2004). In his work, Hegel emphasized the paradox of consciousness through the use of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. According to Magee (2010), man desires knowledge to understand absolute truth, but he cannot think without bringing up contradictions and differences. Ideas and notions hold within them the true nature of their identity (thesis) and simultaneously their opposing or contradictory natures (antithesis). By contrast, historical movement is mainly caused by continuous conflict according to the dialectical method. Therefore, one can categorize Hegel's thoughts into three categories: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Thus, Hegel suggested in his presented philosophical approach that history involves a clash between reality and potential when there is a struggle between opposites (Magee, 2010; Mueller, 1958; Popper, 2004).

Additionally, it may be said that the application of this triangulated relation to real life means that when an idea is presented as a positive concept, it represents the thesis. After interacting with this idea or concept, the opposing idea or concept (antithesis) emerges. It is through the opposing and negating idea of antithesis that another idea, synthesis, is developed. Synthesis is the process of unifying and combining the thesis and antithesis (Fritzman, 2014).

Regardless of the structured pattern that Hegel's dialectical approach follows, there are some cases where this pattern might not fit into this triangulated relationship. Findlay (2014) declared that this Hegelian trend can take forms other than the triangulated structure of 'thesis,' 'antithesis,' and 'synthesis.' Findlay (2014) proceeded by saying that the antithesis can take different forms and levels; thus, the antithesis is no longer a single stage between the thesis and the synthesis. The antithesis by itself can take multiple stages. The whole Hegelian process is pushed from just a three-stage process into a four or five-stage process. Findlay (2014), goes further in his anatomy for Hegel's dialectical approach, by denying the mediating role of the synthesis, as it occurs after the conflict between the thesis and antithesis: "the reconciling functions of the third member are not at all obvious" (p. 73).

In this work we are following Hegel's dialectical approach in investigating the triangulated relationship of the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of personal identity in Susan Abulhawa's *Morning in Jenin*. A central theme in this novel is quest for continuity in identity after displacement. For Abulhawa, quest of identity evolves from the lack of continuity after holding the continuity of personal identity before *Nakba,* as highlighted from the previous scholarly works discussion. This feature of self-identification, and then the quest for personal identity entails Hegel's thesis and the antithesis. The interactions between the thesis and antithesis might lead (but not necessarily) to the final stage, the synthesis.

4. Findings and Discussion

The investigation of personal identity is based on three pillars of continuity: physical, psychological, and social. The analysis that follows will be chronologically organized. That is, the case of continuity of personal identity before the *Nakba* will be presented, followed by the

period during *the Nakba,* and finally post the *Nakba* era. In this regard, Abulhawa (2010) presented the solidness of the Palestinian people's identity at the personal level before *Nakba*. The theological referencing demonstrates the Palestinian people's personal identity. Abulhawa (2010) heightened the psychological continuity not only at the personal level but at the social level too. The social continuity of the personal identity is represented by expanding such continuity to previous ancestors reflected in the Quran that Yehya (Amal's grandfather, who is the head of the Abulhaija family) is still keeping, which is the same Quran that he inherited from his grandfather:

> Extract No. 1*: "Yehya…   pulling an old Quran…. The holy Book had belonged to his grandfather, who had nurtured these groves before him."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 13).

Abulhawa (2010), in the former extract, went in two ways to ensure the psychological continuity of the personal identity. The first is that Yehya is preserving a psychological continuity, of his personal identity, by keeping on the theological or religious attachment to the same religion of his childhood. The second level is the general psychological continuity of the Palestinian people across generations. Such an indication by Abulhawa, projects the thesis before the *Nakba*.

> Extract No. 2: *"Following Basima's death, Dalia became the custodian of her beloved roses. She crossed them for fragrance and color as Basima had taught her, expanded the garden, and planted a gravesite bed of the white-streaked red roses, Basima's most prized"* (Abulhawa, 2010, pp. 23–24).

Furthermore, the social continuity at the personal identity level is asserted through the dialectical relation of the Palestinian society before the *Nakba*. The marriage of Hassan (Amal's father and the oldest sone for Yehya), which serves as the thesis, who belongs to a well-to-do farming family, and Dalia (Amal's mother and Hassan's wife) who serves as the antithesis, who belongs to the Bedouin community, represented a contradicting social segment. Thus, this assertion affirms the continuity of the Palestinian society, through which each member maintains his psychological continuity at the personal level. Dalia, originating from the Bedouin community, extended a smooth and kind relationship with Bassima (Amal's grandmother and Yehya's wife). Dalia is maintaining her social continuity, which contributes to her psychosocial continuity by keeping Basima's garden. Additionally, Dalia maintains this chain of continuity by teaching the same habit to her sons during her visits to the cemetery. Moreover, this dialectical relation between the farming community and the Bedouin community synthesizes with the marriage of Hassan and Dalia. Abulhawa (2010) went further in assuring the stability of such a synthesis:

> Extract No. 3: *"Dalia was respectfully called 'Um Yousef' and Hasan 'Abu Yousef'."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 22).

The marriage of Dalia and Hassan as a synthesis between the farming community and the Bedouin community changed the dynamics of Hassan and Dalia's identification at the personal level. Both are being called by the name of their oldest son. The series of Hassan, Dalia, and their son are seen as a chain that carries continuity within the successive movement of generations; thus, social and psychological continuity is maintained. Nonetheless, distortions to the physical continuity for Palestinians started to follow during and after the events of the *Nakba*:

> Extract No. 4: "*The soldier fired his pistol twice. One shot between Fatooma's eyes, on her white streak. She fell instantly dead. The other through Darweesh's chest... The bullet lodged in Darweesh's spine, condemning him to motionlessness, to a life plagued by unsightly bedsores, a life tormented by the burden of his wife's cheerless fate, bound to a husband who lived only from the chest up. And even from the chest up, he lived on memories of horses and wind*." (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 31)

A significant deflection and change in Darweesh's (Amal's paternal uncle, Hassan's brother and the Yehya's second son) physical continuity that rendered him paralyzed and helpless happened during the *Nakba*. Darweesh before *Nakba*, as a representative of people of his age, will not be the same as Darweesh after *Nakba*. The same distorted personal identity is presented in Ismail's (David; Amal's second brother who was lost during Nakba and then raised by a Jewish family) distorted face and Amal's (who is the protagonist of the novel and the narrator) distorted body. She was targeted by an Israeli soldier while passing one of the checkpoints.

> Extract No. 5: "*A portion of my smooth, soft flesh was torn from my waist*." (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 104).

However, Amal was subject to distortion of her physical continuity; this distortion was not as critical as Darweesh's. Such a distortion of Amal's personal identity at the physical level will keep following her even after moving to the United States. Most importantly, Amal's distorted physical continuity is not as aggravated as Darweesh's due to the different reactions from the two generations that followed. The first generation followed a passive reaction, while the second generation started to follow a more offensive reaction. as in the extract below:

> Extract No. 6: "*Snuggled in luxury on the threshold of a world that brimmed with as much promise as uncertainty, I was starting a new life. But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me*" (Abulhawa, 2010, pp. 136–137).

For the first *Shatat* generation, Susan Abulhawa, in the novel *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), focused on mirroring the distortion, disruption, or collapse of the continuity factor of the personal identity, the antithesis. However, when it comes to Amal and Huda (Amal's closest friend in the refugee's camp) after the 1967 war, the previous chain of continuity is disturbed, and a new chain of continuity is forced, as in the following extract:

> Extract No. 7: "*Face to face, we stared at one another's thoughts, seeing each other's terror and knowing that we had crossed some unmarked boundary beyond which there could be no return*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 63).

For the first *Shatat* generation, Abulhawa (2010) described the results of this generation's choice. This first generation is the generation

that passed their defeat to the coming generations. On the contrary, when it comes to Amal and Huda, Abulhawa justified such distortion and disruption of their personal identity. The new generation's distorted identity results as they are forced to continue with the distortion (antithesis) they inherited from the previous generation. Here, in one way or another, Abulhawa is trying to find a justification for her hybrid being.

Although the personal decisions of the second generation of *Nakba* play a role in forming the personal identity of the second generation, still a fundamentalist touch can be traced. Yousef (Amal's oldest brother) is presented with a dramatic change in the continuity of his personal identity at the psychological level. When the 1967 war erupted, he studied at the University of Bethlehem. The news of the 1967 war came to interrupt the progress of his study (thesis) and the sequence of his education was interrupted. This interruption in his continuity is replaced with a different type of continuity:

> Extract No. 8: *"The word detonates a baggage of dread, which I have lugged on my back since I was five years old. Since 1948, when war and I were formally introduced"* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 76).

For Yousef, the educational continuity was interrupted during the 1967 war. His educational continuity is replaced with war (antithesis); this change is a forced deflection rather than a personal choice. In other words, the new *Nakba* generation was forced to take this path. The hardships and horrors of war came to them rather than a personal choice to undergo them. Additionally, Yousef's access to war triggered a break with his previous psychological continuity and the initiation of a new chapter of his psychological continuity:

> Extract No. 9 "*I CHANGE. My world changes, beginning with the day Haje Um Naseem calls me by my name*." (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 83).

Yousef's change marked a new continuity of his personal identity at the social level. This type of social continuity might not have existed without the 1967 war. This war changed the destiny of the first generation of the *Nakba* with the second generation of the *Nakba*. The two generations are placed in a place of rejection of their status as refugees (antithesis), putting the new generation in confrontation with the new colonizing entity and placing the second generation in an offensive position against the Israelis. Regardless of this change in Yousef's life after 1967, he is still maintaining continuity to the basis of his being. The fundamental basis of his humanity is in his firm obligation to conserve life, irrespective of the hostility against him. This attitude forms the core thesis of his identity

> Extract No. 10: "*I fire my weapon, but in the moment of truth, when the test of my courage looks me in the eyes, I cannot take the life of another. I am afraid of violating life*." (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 83).

Moreover, the 1967 war came with the antithesis of the colonizers' intentions. The 1967 war was a continuity of the existential cleansing against the Palestinians at the unhomed place, as Abusittah (2001) pointed out. Paradoxically, the war in 1967 resulted in the antithesis of Israelis intension. The war resulted in fortifying and fostering the continuity of the second generation of *Nakba* with the first generation of *Nakba*. As traced in the following extract, the second generation of *Nakba* (represented in Amal and Yousef) are boosting their personal identity based on social continuity. This idea is consistent with Al-Ma'amari et al. (2013), who said that after studying *Mornings in Jenin*, the construction of individual and national identity can be traced differently. The main component in forming the individual identity is depicted through remembering and nostalgic references to the past. Here we can say that remembering and nostalgic references encompass various forms of physical, psychological, and social continuity.

> Extract No. 11: *"For the same reason, Yousef was unable to escape to the hills at will. Instead, he tipped his after-hours energy into the garage he had inherited from his father...But every Friday, after the Jomaa prayers, coerced by the call of solitude, the seduction of natural beauty, and the potent compulsion of habit, he would risk the humiliation and interminable delays at checkpoints to venture to the hills, as he and Hasan had done... There, under the shelter of trees, Yousef read. It was a daring endeavor, each time a solitary incitement to honor his father's memory. Just as Amal continued to read at dawn, as she and her father had done, Yousef kept returning to the pastures with a book. These were the conditions of helplessness, grasping at continuity, salvaging what could be kept of their source of strength—Hasan, their baba."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 90).

Regardless of what Amal faced in Palestine (the camp or the internal school), she always maintained a continuum of her personal identity. For Amal, so far, it is that social and psychological continuity that compensated for the physical distortion in the personal identity. However, her social and psychological continuity is collapsing after moving to the United States and her attempt to redefine herself within the American culture. For Amal to redefine herself, she gets into a process of acculturation. By being involved in an acculturation process, Amal is breaking any previous continuity she had before, socially and psychologically as in the following extract:

> Extract No. 12: *"I...let myself be known as "Amy"—Amal without the hope. I was a word drained of its meaning. A woman emptied of her past. The truth is that I wanted to be someone else."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 142).

Amal's distorted physical continuity was not noted, remarked on, or highlighted at the personal identity level while in Palestine. This absence can be attributed to the role of the social and psychological continuity, which helped her overcome such a disruption. However, Amal's attempts to 'be a new person' and cut herself off from the previous psychological and social continuity resulted in exposing this physical distortion. Such exposure comes is antithetical to the thesis previously discussed. Regardless of her attempts to cover this distortion, such attempts are failing:

> Extract No. 13: "*It took me days to find a suitable swimming suit. A bikini was out of the question. Wow. Were you in an accident or something? Kelly asked in the changing room when she saw my belly. Something, I answered. I chose a conservative*

black suit because it had a cluster of plastic daisies, a rather silly-looking thing, on the fabric that fell over the most obvious indentation in my abdomen" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 142).

What Amal was trying to hide in the United States, because it distorted her sense of physical continuity, was accepted in the refugee camp in Lebanon. Amal struggled to hide her distortion from the bullet that wounded her in Jenin. However, when she was reconnected with the environment in which she truly belonged, the distortions in her physical continuity became less critical. This point is clear with Majid's (Amal's husband who died during the Israeli incursion to Lebanon) reaction on his first night with her:

Extract No. 14: *"His hand moved lovingly over my abdomen and he kissed its waves of scar tissue. He gave my body the acceptance I had been unable to give it myself."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 162).

Extract No. 15: "*How it hurt, ever sweetly, satisfyingly, to be Amal again—not anonymous Amy.*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 153).

Furthermore, after returning to Lebanon and her reunion with her social atmosphere, Amal reorganized her self-identification. The social environment surrounding Amal in Lebanon restored the psychological and social continuity she lacked during her stay in the United States. Accordingly, Amal's supply of social and psychological continuity had a remarkable impact on regaining her true personal identity, as Amal once again regained the feelings of being Amal (thesis) and not Amy (antithesis). On the contrary, Amal lost her personal identity during her first stay in the United States, and after her second return to the United States, she lost what she found in Lebanon. The distorted personal identity is not limited to Amal or Yousef; such a distortion is extended to their lost brother Ismail (David). However, Ismail was still living within the premises of historical Palestine, but this was not enough for him to prevent the crush of his psychological and social continuity. Eventually, it will not be enough for him to live in Palestine. What is more important to consider is his homeland as Palestine (thesis), and not Israel. (antithesis). The following extract says much about the collapse of Ismail's personal identity:

Extract No. 16: "*More and more, David's thoughts were of Amal, all that remained of his phantom family. Moshe had been the one who finally had told him, a dying man's confession. Learning the truth of his origins so late in his life had indicted every thought, every love, every conviction that had built David into himself. The truth that put Moshe to rest at last was David's undoing. To learn that his very existence was the fruit of Arab love; that his first breath had awaited him at the arch of an Arab woman's womb; that his first milk had come from her breasts; and that the first to love him had been Arabs. This knowledge cast David into a gaping chasm between truth and lies, Arab and Israeli, Muslim and Jew*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 200).

Before Moshe (an officer at the Israeli army who kidnaps Ismail and raises him as his son) confessed to Ismail about Ismail's origins, the continuity of Ismail's personal identity was progressing smoothly. However, after Ismail's knowledge about his Arab origins, he experienced contradiction and dialectical fluctuation between the thesis and antithesis. The dialectical fluctuation for Ismail was more problematic than that for Amal. For Amal, Amy was the antithesis for Amal, and the United States was the antithesis of home. Still, Ismail went into a circle without any clear start or end. In other words, the dialectical points as 'Arab and Israeli' or 'Muslim and Jew' are clear, but the problem for Ismail was that he could not define the thesis and the antithesis:

Extract No. 17: "*The two truths of one man, each as true as the other, opposite the other, repelling the other in an infinite struggle for David's soul. The confession shook David to the core, unhinging his deepest beliefs*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 200).

Extract No. 18 *"But in David's melancholy face, I could see the shadows of Mama's eyes, Baba's nose, and David's own mistaken identity... Fate had placed him somewhere between, where he belonged to neither..."* (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 206- 207).

Perhaps the answer to Ismail's question about his identity did not come from Ismail; the answer came from his social surrounding, which expresses the social part of the personal identity. The collapse of Ismail's social circle provides a preliminary answer for Ismail. While he remained revolving indecisively, the Jewish community surrounding him was more decisive. His wife refused to consider him a Jewish man:

Extract No. 19: "*The tug of his roots, nagging him to learn more, changed David. His wife could not bear his secret. That her husband had not been born a real Jew did not suit her upbringing nor her family's sense of propriety. They eventually divorced, splitting down the middle with ideological cleavers.*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 200).

Contrary to Ismail's wife's reaction after knowing that her husband was not an authentic Jew, Amal's reaction came to embrace Ismail with all his complexities:

Extract No. 20: "*No, she thought. Of course not. You and I are the remains of an unfulfilled legacy, heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities and ragged confusion. In the complicity of siblinghood, of aloneness and unrootedness, Amal loved David instinctively, despite herself and despite what he had done or who he had become. She ached to gather him in an embrace and absolve the pangs of conscience that tormented him. She wanted to fill a seat at his table and share in his loneliness.*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 211)

We need to pay attention to the fact that the insertion of Sara's story within Ismail's is not haphazard. It is believed that such an insertion is intentional so that the reader can make a comparison between the two characters. While Ismail remained in Palestine, Sara never had direct contact with Palestine. The fact that Ismail possessed what Sara missed did not prevent the collapse of the continuity of his personal

identity; hence he represents the antithesis of Sara. As a thesis that contradicts Ismail's distorted identity, Sara did not have any direct contact with Palestine; however, she can still maintain and hold onto her personal identity. It becomes more evident that the actual value is not just in direct contact with the homeland; the actual value is how and what is the perceived homeland. Ismael lived in historical Palestine, but he perceived Israel as his homeland, while Sara lived in the United States while acknowledging Palestine as her home of origin.

The meeting between Ismail, Amal, and Sara comes at the turn of the novel *Mornings in Jenin*. Eventually, during the last chapters, another meeting takes place, which will complete the framing of the three generations' distorted identity in addition to framing the distortion of any coexistence between Palestine and Israel:

> Extract No. 21: "*In Ari's office, we were three generations hauled together by the willful drag of a foreclosed story swindled by fate but gathered in that moment to demand to be told. The story of one family in an obscure village, visited one day by a history that was not its own, and forever trapped by longing between roots and soil. It was a tale of war, its chilling, burning, and chilling-again fire. Of furious love and a suicide bomber. Of a girl who escaped her destiny to become a word, drained of its meaning. Of grown children sifting through the madness to find their relevance. Of a truth that pushed its way through lies, emerging from a crack, a scar, in a man's face.*" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 222)

The meeting takes place at Ari's office. Ari is Amal's father's (Hassan) friend. Before *Nakba*, the friendship between Hassan and Ari was an attempted mediating solution (synthesis). However, after *Nakba*, this friendship between Hassan and Ari was lost. Eventually, Amal's return to Palestine, after 30 years of exile, the three generations that followed *Nakba*, Ari (from the first generation), Amal and Ismail (from the second generation), and Sara and Jacob (from the third generation), are all in one place. The three generations expressed their prospects, dreams, and hopes, and the collapse of such prospects, dreams, and hopes. The meeting directly portrayed the distortions of each of the three generations. Such distortions (antithesis) are mirrored through Ari's loneliness all his life, such as Amal's distorted body, Ismail's inability to belong to a society, and Sara and Jacobs gray social and psychological identification. These experiences came to negate the thesis as the prosperous life Ari planned to have in Palestine, Amal's dreams for a better life and Ismail's thoughts of belonging, and Sara and Jacob's clear identification. This meeting is a cornerstone that projects the collapse of the synthesis and distorted identity that remained at the antithesis of the three generation's prospects, dreams, and hopes.

4. Conclusion

Mornings in Jenin presented the antithesis of personal identity's physical, psychological, and social continuity as experienced by Palestinian diaspora, namely the three depicted generations in the novel. The three generations had their dreams, thoughts and ideas about themselves. However, not only did the three generations fail to attain their dream, but they also ended up cultivating the opposite of what they were looking for. Before the *Nakba*, the continuity of personal identity was projected as a continuing thesis of the ancestors. Distortions and contraditions start to be apparent during the unhoming process of the *Nakba*. During the march of *Nakba*, the physical continuity is crushed as an immediate result of the Palestinians' disconnection from their homeland. The more the Palestinians entered *Shatat*, the more psychological and social antithesis of their personal identity is traced. Amal's attempt to change her name and fully assimilate into American society represents the most intensified antithesis, reflecting her crushed psychological and social continuity. Regardless of the bloody conflicts, Yousef was still able to maintain a psychological continuity to his wider affiliation to mankind as he was not able to kill another human regardless of the violence of his opponent.

In conclusion, the personal identity of the Palestinian people revolved around the antithesis. Regardless of the fluctuating level of such antithesis, the synthesis was not attained due to the ongoing *Shatat*. A distorted home will keep projecting a distorted continuity of the personal identity. The only stable manifestation of personal identity (as a thesis) was projected before *Nakba*, while still being attached to the home of origin. From the three generations after *Nakba*, the thesis of personal identity was absent and replaced with fluctuating reflections of the negated (antithesis) social, personal, and physical continuity. It is noteworthy that the novel *Mornings in Jenin* infers a lot with Ghassan Kanafani's (1963) رجال في الشمس *Men in the Sun*, which makes a comparative study feasible.

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