

## Palestinian Women and the Israeli Violence

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the effect of Israeli occupation on Palestinian women in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*. In the main, the paper is going to concentrate on the Israeli violence against Palestinian women in this novel. In fact, women fall victims of occupation oppression. They suffer from the sequences of colonialism and its effect upon women. The novels specifically hinge on Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands portrayed in the plots. The people of these lands deal with various types of colonial oppression, involving racial violence. Women are the most influenced people by the encounter with Israeli occupation because they lose their sons, husbands and relatives. As a result, they lead hard life created by the Jewish occupation who practice hard violence against them. As such, the paper will accurately study women's agony in order to accentuate the essence of racial violence in the course of the novels' plots.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to apply the effect of Israeli violence on Palestinian people as result of encounter with occupation in the light of Fanon's arguments. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Indeed, Fanon (1961) focuses on the violence in the colonial context. He discusses both of physical and psychological effect on native people. According to Fanon, using violence is a necessary manner of the colonial strategy which brings out defeated consciousness and oppressing conditions that are harsh obstacles to person's liberation. In reaction to colonial oppression and exploitation, Fanon scrutinizes that violence is essentially valuable in the fight against colonial for liberation and for this reason urges the decolonizing people to free themselves from the control of colonial power and get equal status with the colonist by use means of violence or nonviolence.

The local people are suffering from, oppressed, subjugated, dehumanized, marginalized, devalued and exploited by the colonizers. Fanon says that: "The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white." Fanon discusses colonialism as a world of oppression which makes the native people feel subaltern to the colonizers. He explains that the means of colonial rule is violence. This violence is carried out by tools of canons and persistent force by the army. Fanon discusses that "their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons." (Fanon, 1961). Consequently, the effect of Israeli violence will be specifically applied in terms of this article.

Fanon explained the situation of Algeria in his book in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which was shape his opinion of colonial violence, through the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The colonial of Algeria is very similar to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and their agony from the use of violence by the Israeli occupation. The colonizer's existence in Palestine is deplaned on military strength. Any encounter to this force must also be of a violent nature because it is the only "language" the colonizer speaks.

Fanon also documents the negative effects of violence from use violence. The first and most obviously harm of violence is the physical damage that it inflicts upon people who deals with violence or suffers from it. In most of Fanon's books, argues the effect of colonial violence on indigenous people. Expressing frustration he observations that when the local people is subjugated, oppressed, enslaved, abused, tortured, and when his wife or daughter is killed or raped, he protests to no one. He feels powerless and frustrated. This strategy, also destroys a native people humanity and makes them feel they are just animals. As Fanon's opinions of violence as the currency of colonialism, it becomes usual actions of daily life for the colonial people (Fanon, 1961).

Indeed, Israel occupation in Palestine has lots of similarity with other colonialism like European colonialism which occurred in Africa, South Asia and Latin American countries. Zionism, the Jewish political group is inspired by the technique of European colonialism that fortified the basis of the State of Israel. Zionist movement granted a Jewish homeland on the land that belongs to Palestinians. It has resemblance to the 'settler colonies'. Israel occupation has given Israeli people the power to rule over the Palestinian in the occupied lands who have become powerless. It has strict administrative control over the inhabitation (Farag, 2017). Additionally, the Israeli authority and its military have been in control of currency, import-export trade, labour mobility and control of all natural resources including land and water. Israel occupation was affected on many educational institutions. Most of them were closed in West Bank. The curriculum has been changed and has introduced new syllabi in its place, which has simplified the establishment and strengthening of the Jewish state. (Said 2000:434).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The focus of the article will be on Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, and the general framework will be postcolonial feminism. We will use the violence concept to be applied. This concept is going to be explained for the sake of description of its methodological application to analyze the chosen novel. The application of postcolonial feminism to this novel will explore these colonial powers which were worked to increase their own political authority and control on the colonies' resources. The occupying power made most of the people of colonial territory to be enslaved, exploited and oppressed. The article will explain this concept and shed light on the theoretical argumentations about it, on a deeper level.

Franz Fanon will be depended on so as to provide a foreground of the theory about feminist postcolonial for exploration of the Israel occupation, and the obsolete social pressures influence of the selected novels' protagonists. In portraying their struggles inside the general plight of the Palestinian people, Khalifeh condemns both the colonial military forces and the similarly oppressive patriarchal rules. In addition, so as to explain the problems that the protagonists under Israel occupation are facing, these concepts will be introduced. This paper also explored occupation attempts to erase Palestinian's culture and tries to expel them out of their lands. It can be concluded that Khalifeh's Palestinian women characters reflect the sufferings under the Israel occupation. Throughout their challenge, it can be concluded that Palestinians are able to resist occupation and try to liberate their land.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sahar Khalifeh embodied the Israeli violence in most of her works. The root of racial violence relates to the fatal encounters between the Palestinian people and the Jews reflected in numerous literary contexts. The Palestinian-Israeli dispute, approached in Khalifeh's fictions, coincides with the beginning of the catastrophe since 1948. From that time Palestinian tried to resist the Jewish occupation. The reactions of the Palestinian against the Israel oppression includes various ways like fighting fronts, intifada (uprising), protest demonstration, and return marches. They represent the Palestinian will to be independent and to express their denial of racial violence (Mattar, 2014). Palestinian experienced harsh racial ordeals which physically and psychically impacted on their lives. As result, racial violence was a real reason for raising the Palestinian awareness about the Jewish strategy to steal their land and persecution. The Palestinian gradually developed determination to oppose the Jewish political bias against them (Lentın, 2018). In Saher Khalifeh's works both men and women considered victims of such racial violence. Yet, women are oppressed by occupation more than men, which is the focus of current article.

Sahar Khalifeh accurately provides ample description of Israel racial violence and its strong influence upon Palestinian individuality, in particular women. She conveys the genuine plights of the Palestinian women at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Women are dealt with as victims of Jewish violence due to the Israeli excessive oppression of the Palestinian territories where women exemplify an essential part of the composition of this society. Thus, women become the most damaging of racial violence in two different behavior. First, they suffer from the direct Jewish oppression exerted against them as Palestinian people when they faced with beatings, humiliation, exploitation blockades, poverty, demolished houses, unemployment, sieges, kicked people out of their lands, killing, arrest campaigns to put thousands of Palestinian people in jail and political detention influence the lives of the Palestinian. Second, in the Palestinian society and in most of Arabic societies, men are responsible for gaining the expenditures for the family. Women are in charge of domestic affairs and for taking care of children. Therefore, when the Israeli occupation begin arbitrary arrests against men and put them in prison; or economic penalties imposed. In this case, Palestinian women are left alone suffering with their families. They lose their expenditures. as a result, they have to play the role of men. The Jewish occupation, in this regard, applies an indirect racial violence

against Palestinian women because it divest them of living in dignity when it deprives them of the source of their living and leave them suffer alone without help (Kifah 2016).

racial violence against the Palestinian women takes numerous forms. The Israel occupation oppresses women and deprives them of their rights to live in a satisfactory manner. It demeans their dignity as human; and, furthermore, the policies of the occupation force them to live under harsh and difficult living conditions. Accordingly, racial violence against women is variety in Khalifeh's works. It involves social, economic, political, cultural and security affects. In an interview with Khalifeh, S. (1998) argue the colonial encounters between the Palestinian people and the Jews as the major reason of women's sufferings. The characters in novels exemplify the real fates of the Palestinian women. Khalifeh shed light on the social effect of the Jewish racial violence against women. Her novel is a fine example of this racial violence. Palestinian men, in the plot, are suffered from the Jewish occupation. Women are victims of their persecuted men by occupation, as a result, their men persecute them because they suffer psychologically from defeat and humiliation under occupation authority.

Fanon (1961) says that "His humiliating communal actions of submission and obedience are also ego-dystonic. Therefore, under the increasing influence of this unbearable condition, he turns his frustration together with his anger against himself and his own people." (p.54). Men, who are subjugated by colonialism reflected this harshly treat on their families. The novel hinge on the Jewish effect upon the social lives of Palestinian women. They face masculine oppression which is begin by the Jewish occupation. As the title of this novel indicates, the novel holds a rebellious tone towards male-mainstream and occupation. In other words, defeated men have to resist and should not surrender to the Jewish abuse. additionally, they should not reflect their personal sour experience of persecution onto the lives of their women.

According to Ashur et al. (2008) the indirect racial violence which created by the colonizers gradually leads to the destruction of the lives of colonized. In the long run, women's lives will be subject to this violence. An example of Khalife's novel *The Inheritance* the female protagonists oppressed, exploited and left alone because of the colonizer that devastated the lives of their men; and it forced other to change and treat their women badly. Therefore, women try to live alone in far and safe place in order to escape the severity of men. By time, these women socially lose their relation with life and endure psychic disappointment. Their lives reflect the apparent effect of the Jewish occupation on the Palestinian women.

Racial violence has impact factor in the social lives of Palestinian women in Khalifeh's works. Ashur et al. (2008) refer to Khalifeh's novels as a clear example of racial violence upon women. The novels embody the social dilemmas of women under Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation kicked Palestinian people out of their territories and destroyed their houses. Thus, they leave for a different places and sometime combined with other cultures that were totally different from their culture. Some of her novels explain the effect of the different culture on their families in the exile. In traditional the men accept everything from their sons. They forgive their mistake. However, daughters strictly and violently punished them if they commit any mistake. This treatment creates a sense of discrimination. Males are preferred to females because they belittle the family sufferings under the colonial conditions or in exile. They try to marry them to anyone in order to get rid of them and their responsibility. In a striking way, Khalifeh also accentuates the economic factor as the primal cause of racial violence. Some families want to get rid of their daughters because of poverty as a result from the occupation (Ashur et al., 2008).

Palestinian women are obviously portrayed as the victims of the encounter with Jewish occupation since begins the conflict between Palestinian and Israeli military in the early years of the outbreak of the first and second intifada. Women are affected by the Israeli blockade, harsh economic conditions and bad security situation. The politics of Israeli restrains the life for Palestinian people and make them inferior to occupation authority. Consequently, both politics and lack of security fiercely restrict the Palestinian women's lives (Khalifeh, 1984).

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

Israeli racial violence appears through the position of women characters in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*. essentially, women suffer from the Jewish colonialism. Palestinian women are the casualties of the Israeli violence in direct and indirect ways. The novel narrates the story of a group of women and their painful experiences caused by colonial occupations. These women are Zayna, Futna, Nahleh and Violet each woman suffers from a certain and misery problem in her life. They share the same agony under colonialism. In spite of the fact that, they have different ordeals. What unites them is their subjugation by Israeli racial violence. The suffering of racial violence leads to different changes of the Palestinian society under the colonial authority (DiAngelo, 2018). Similarly, women, in

Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, are exploited by the Jewish occupation. Their families are also undergo to the same misery experience as they share bitter subjugation and racial violence. Some of the women are directly faced by the colonialism. In this way, they have direct encounter with the Jewish colonizers. They are instantaneously affected by colonial violence. Some others are indirectly impacted by such racial violence. In this case, their families are oppressed by violence. Consequently, racial violence influences them through the families in an indirect way. So the oppressed who are brutalized by the violence of the oppressor also turn that violence against themselves and their families members when they have no ability to fight occupation (Fanon 1961).

Zayna is an example of the indirect affect. She is almost the main character of the novel; and she influence by the Israeli violence when the Jews occupied the Palestinian territories and made them suffer from harsh economic condition. This situation prompted Zayna's father and others to migrate abroad. The story narrates Zayna sufferings. The novel reveals her birth place in Brooklyn, the United States of America. As such, we could understand her birth in exile. Her father is overwhelmed by his nostalgic homesickness. He always remains to keep some memories about his good days in his Palestinian Ghaza village called Wadi al-Rihan before he leave his country to America because of the harsh economic and politics conditions imposed by the occupation. The confrontations between Palestinians and Jews before the Oslo Accord disrupted economic life in the territories that belonging to the Palestinians and thus increased their suffering and prompted many of them to leave their country to search for sources of livelihood. Zayna is obsessed with his father stories about his past life in the village. Therefore, she also feels longing for their homeland. Moreover, he adamantly persists on bringing up his daughters, including Zayna, according to his Arabic traditions which are completely different from American culture; his words clarify this attitude:

I want my daughters to be brought up as Arabs, clear and transparent as a candle. I want them to marry Arabs and Muslims, according to the Prophet's teaching. I want them to be impregnated by Muslims. To hell with America- I'm going back home (p.8).

the American traditions concerning marriage effects on his daughter since they sharply different from his own Arabic cultural and religious beliefs. He insisted on instilling these beliefs in his daughter Zayna whose previous name was Zaynab. He tells her that she should remember her Arab origin and comply with God's teachings to avoid imitating the American social traditions. He tried to protect her from the life in exile. In addition, she should have good behaviors because her personal conduct affects one's reputation because Arab women have a responsibility to protect the reputation of the family:

Listen to me, Zaynab, the most important things in life are a good reputation, the fear of God, and Day of Judgment. It's possible for a person to live without this and that, but if you forget God, He forgets you, and if you ignore God's words you won't remember people's words (p.11).

The father's beliefs contradict with the life in America where freedom and marriage is not restricted by social traditions. Furthermore, this might be Zayna's decision to marry and get pregnant since she is born in a society that is completely different from her ancestors' society. Therefore, she is almost depicted as ignorant of this fact. Zayna's parents are introduced as divorced. When her life is threatened by her father, she decides to go to her maternal American grandmother who in the capital city, Washington. In doing so, she seeks safe haven from the father. However, she seems lost between the two cultures, namely, the American culture and homeland culture; she contemplates her lost life as follows:

my language was lost before I was lost and so was my identity. My name and my address followed suit. My original name was Zaynab Hamdan, and with time it became Zayna. My father was called Muhammad Hamdan and with time I was left with neither Muhammad nor Hamdan. My father's birthplace was Wadi al- Rihan and mine Brooklyn. As Zayna caught between two languages and two cultures – my father's Brooklyn and the west Bank on one side and my maternal grandmother's American culture on the other. I was later left without any culture and lived in a vacuum. (p.9)

The sense of loss dominates Zayna's life. She is despondent about her lost state in America. Therefore, she decides to live with the grandmother; and she, consequently, begins to search for her homeland's roots which cut by occupation. The plot, then, sheds light on another decisive episode of her life. She is in her thirties chairing an anthropology department. Her uncle writes her a letter informing her that the father might die and she must come to the West Bank in order to claim her inheritance. At this point, she seizes the opportunity to alleviate her nostalgic homesickness; and she finally can see her true homeland which she long imagined. Ultimately, she could be reunited with her extended family in the Ghaza. Sometimes she sits on the sea and imagines the arrival of her family escaping

from Palestine: “I looked beyond the bridge and beyond the sea at the port. This is where my family had arrived in boats that had carried thousands, spewing them forth without mercy” (p.25). The colonial occupation separated people from their families. They could not live together because they are threatened by the Jewish brutal racial violence; her uncle Abu Jabbar describes this experience When he tried to console her after the loss of her life in exile: “what can we do my child, this is our destiny, we lost the country and relatives, and each one of us lives in a different place. This is our lot in life” (p.33).

Zayna’s father is one of those people who underwent the same racial experience. The significance of Zayna’s story lies in the father’s colonial experience. As I have argued earlier, racial violence influences women in an indirect way. Zayna’s life falls under this category. She is indirectly influenced by Israeli violence. At the beginning, her father is bitterly persecuted by the Jewish occupation. The Israeli forces swept through his homeland. They demolished their village and destroyed their belongings. Therefore, he decides to emigrate from Palestine to American for the sake of gaining citizenship. In American, he marries Zayna’s mother and they gave birth to her. He also marries a woman other than her mother. Zayna recounts this in these words: “The story began in New York, when my father came from his village and married an American woman, my mother, and as a result acquired a green card and became a resident alien” (p.3).

Zayna, accordingly, is born in two discrepant culture i.e., the Palestinian culture inherited from her father and the diasporic or American culture. In this sense, she is torn between these cultures. Accordingly, racial violence influence upon Zayna is cultural. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1961) says that the colonial violence could be indirect influence on colonized through culture. This is because the native people intermix with new cultures when they leave their homeland. The result is that they acquire new cultural beliefs that contradict with the original culture. The case of Zayna’s father is similar to Fanon’s (1961) claims. He is victimized by the Jewish occupation. He projects his personal suffering from Israeli violence on his daughter. She indirectly becomes the victim of this violence. The father wants his daughter’s life to be strictly controlled by his homelands’ traditional beliefs. It can be noted that in the words of Zayna’s father with his friends and is encouraging them to leave life in exile and return to the homeland in order to keep their sons and daughters from being lost in this life. Zayna describes her father’s treatment as strict:

what are we waiting for, friends? Haven’t we had enough of America and its trash? We all have boys and girls, do you want your daughters to be loose like American girls? Do you want to protect your girls, keep them pure, and bring them up strictly and marry them well (p.7).

So the projecting the personal experiences on the posterity, sons or daughters, is a form of violence caused by the colonizers and transmitted through parents to their sons and daughters. This case is evident in Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance*. The Jewish racial violence exerted by against the father is conveyed through the father to his daughter, Zayna who becomes the victim of such violence in an indirect way. Fanon (1961) claims that "because it is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: “Who am I in reality?” (p. 182).

Indeed, Sahar Khalifeh inside the occupied territories of Palestine, being an eye witness to Palestinian exile and embodied their suffering in most of her novels. In one of her interviews she says, “the first thing they did after Occupation is they kicked the people out of the villages and pushed them towards the bridge –they wanted them to leave the West Bank and all Palestinian altogether” (Nazareth,1980, p.71). Since then, they have not found a permanent abode and are migrating continually suffering from displacement, loss and agony.

Futna is another major female character in Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance*. Like Zayna, she suffers from racial violence. However, she directly confronts racial violence which devastated her life. Futna is Zayna’s step-mother. When her father returns from American, he marries Futna. Futna was the victim of confrontations with the Israeli occupation. Racial violence begins with security deterioration. Zayan inaugurates a cultural centre. In the opening ceremony, armed clashes between the Israeli and the Palestinians broke out. The Jews, therefore, decided to impose a blockade on the whole area. The Palestinians could not go out to fulfill their needs. The ceremony citadel was besieged. The plot attributes the blockade to the Jewish refusal of the ceremony because it is close to the security checkpoint and it disturbs the settlers:

The song excited the spectators, who joined in, singing very loudly, their voices reaching all the way to the closest police station. It reached the other checkpoint by wireless and ordered it to get ready. In

their enthusiasm, they were not aware that the citadel had been isolated from the rest of the world and from Wadi al- Rihan, surrounded by security forces (p.228).

The colonial security forces gathered outside the citadel. But the Palestinians still do not recognize the spread of the Israeli armed forces around their area, so the show went on, the people dancing and singing without anyone inside the citadel noticing the military blockade outside, the increased number of security forces.

## 5.CONCLUSION

This article has studied Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* from the affect of the racial violence perspective. The paper has identified the Jewish colonialism as the main cause of Palestinian women's sufferings. The Israeli colonizers exert bitter exclusion of Palestinian women. Their oppressive colonial means to degrade women's position in their homeland. The Jewish oppression, represented in the novels, has a number of characteristics. It brings about oppression, destruction, killing, arbitrary arrest and so forth. These practices impact the lives of Palestinian women in direct and indirect ways. In some cases, the occupation arrest or kill some men. Here, women are deprived of their brothers, father, sons or husbands. They leads difficult life as they lose their support and the most valuable thing in their life. The colonizers, consequently, practice non-human oppression. In other cases, women are oppressed in a direct way. The colonizers uses their military power against the Palestinians. Women become victims in these encounters with colonizers. They are directly in fight against the colonizers. They could not escape their harsh destiny. The colonizers' subjugate agendas complicate the position of women. This is because women are persecuted by colonial racial violence.

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