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**Palestinians' Displacement and Identity Crisis in Hala Alyan's Salt  
Houses (2017) and Shahla Ujayli's A Sky So Close to Us (2019)**

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## **Dedications**

*I dedicate this dissertation to my father, who has been a guiding light through my life. This work is a reflection of your sacrifices, support and belief.*

*To my mother, I am grateful forever, to my brother Massi,*

*To my dear Yasmine, working by your side has been more than just academic collaboration, support.*

**MELISSA**

*To my parents, whose endless love, sacrifices, your unwavering support has been my greatest strength.*

*To my dear brother thank you for your constant encouragement and belief in me. I am also grateful to my dear sister Kenza, and to my best friends, Lydia and Maroua, for their unwavering support.*

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## Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to examine how displacement, identity, and cultural memory are represented in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *a Sky So Close to Us*. It seeks to explore how both authors portray the impact of exile and migration on personal and collective identity, particularly within the context of Arab societies marked by war, diaspora, and generational fragmentation. By comparing these two narratives, the study aims to highlight the ways in which literature functions as a space for negotiating belonging, and reconstructing fragmented identities in the face of loss and displacement.

Through the theoretical framework applies Amin Maalouf's concept of plural identity from in *the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to belong* (1998) and Edward Said's *Out of Place* following Orientalism and the Other's concepts to analyze Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019). Maalouf's notion that identity is hybrid, dynamic, and shaped by cultural interaction helps explain how characters negotiate belonging amid exile and displacement. Said's use of the two concepts exposes how western narratives construct the East as inferior and exotic, offering a lens to understand how both authors challenge stereotypical images of Arab identity. Together, these theories reveal how Alyan and Ujayli portray identity as a space of resistance and reconstruction.

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that both *Salt Houses* (2017) and *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) explore identity as a multifaceted construct shaped by exile, displacement, and memory. Through Amin Maalouf's theoretical lens, the novels reveal how personal and collective identities evolve through cultural encounters and historical disruption. Hala and Shahla reimagine belonging not as a return to a lost homeland but as a process of continuous negotiation and self-redefinition.

**Keywords:** displacement, exile, belonging, struggle, diaspora, identity crisis.

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## **I. Introduction**

Surviving under Israeli occupation has been one of the hardest and most painful struggles for Palestinian people. Within literary and cultural narratives, this condition of displacement extends beyond geographical exile to encompass a fragmentation of identity and belonging. Palestinian writers often portray this forced dislocation as a crisis of hybridity, where the sense of home becomes simultaneously physical and symbolic. In addition to upsetting historical and cultural memory, the forced separation from the homeland reshapes the Palestinians within a framework of the loss homeland and resistance. Displaced from their communities, many Palestinians have been compelled to adapt to unfamiliar environments where discrimination and marginalization are prevalent, limiting their ability to preserve native cultural practices and traditions. This encounter disrupts individual identity, positioning Palestinians between the normative expectations of the host society and the rich legacy of their homeland. Over time, such relocation affects not only the physical sense of place associated with home but also how individuals understand themselves, engage with their origins and traverse the symbolic and imagined space of home, where memories of belonging and cultural rootedness.

The West Bank, an enclosed region in the Middle East along the Western bank of the Jordan River, including Jerusalem and Gaza, has experienced systematic and persistent constraints on human rights, profoundly affecting daily life. Beyond the physical and bureaucratic barriers such as roadblocks and permit requirements that limit movement, fragment communities, and restrict access to employment, healthcare, education, and family connections- Palestians navigate a landscape marked by surveillance and control. Within literary and cultural representations, these conditions are often depicted as more than political impositions; they shape the collective consciousness, influence the negotiation of identity, and redefine the symbolic understanding of home and belonging.

Numerous Arab diaspora narratives explore the implications of war on displacement and identity crises such as Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us*. These narratives focus on both male and female's experiences, highlighting this dissertation that examines the intergenerational effects of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians, exploring how decades of political subjugation and displacement have shaped collective identity, social structures, and psychological resilience across successive generations. relocation and the following constant struggle in Alyan's and Ujayli's novels. It attempts to examine the first generation's experience of displacement, trauma of displacement, and the struggle to start over in exile. It investigates the second and third generations' emotional weight of displacement in the host country, concentrating on identity crises and the possibility of becoming successful people. In order to examine this theme, we will rely on Edward Said's *Out of Place* and Amine Maalouf's *in the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*.

## **1. The Review of Literature**

Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) and *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) were approached from different perspectives by previous scholars. They are two examples of works that give moving tales that capture the complexities of cultural fragmentation, identity, and war. This part critically examines these contributions, are looking at the ways in which reviewers and other writers have framed both works and pointing out any contradictions or gaps that this dissertation aims to resolve.

Mahmoud Al-Shetawi and Samia Al-Ramahi's *Between Rootedness and Alienation: An Ecological Reading of Hala Alyan's Salt Houses*, analyze how Alyan employs gardens, trees, water, and seas as metaphors for both alienation and rootedness in order to blend nature with displacement. They contend that whereas water imagery particularly the sea signals loss

and estrangement, Palestinian characters try to foster connection and fend off erasure by caring for gardens wherever they end themselves. They claim that the book turns into an ecological representation of exile.

“The novel reveals the role of nature environmental elements like plants, gardens, and trees in reflecting the characters’ senses of rootedness and belonging, while water, seas. And oceans describe their senses of alienation and estrangement. *Salt Houses* draws on how the dispossessed Palestinians’ cultivation and regeneration of their gardens and plants drive their struggle, resistance, and existence against the Israeli occupation.” (Samia AL Ramah & Mahmoud F. Al-Shetawi, 2024, P. 01)

Yousef Awad’s *Sea Imagery in Hala Alyan’s Salt House (2021)* emphasizes the sea’s metaphorical significance in the story. He notes how frequent allusions to the sea, character sitting by it, wading-offer a glimpse into the interior moods of longing and exile. The water becomes a transitional area between memory and hope, homeland, and displacement.

“Sea imagery increasingly occupies central positions in these narratives which reveal Alyan’s and her descendants’ endeavour to express their opinions through memories and experiences of displacement, exile and estrangement.” (Yousef Awad, 2021, P.23)

In this quotes Awad shows that he see grows more symbolic throughout the book, capturing the characters’ sense of exile, loss, and distance between their past and present, and between homeland and diaspora.

According to Issa J. Boullata in his article *World Literature Today* Alyans’s debut is praised for its emotional depth and beautiful style. *Salt Houses (2017)*, he observes, stays away from overtly political situations in favor of concentrating on the human aftermath from battle, especially the internalization and generational transmission of grief.

“In this novel, Hala Alyan has effectively portrayed half a century of the Palestinian diaspora with much of its agony and human suffering that daily newspapers do not narrate...” – (Issa J. Boullata. P. 77)

In this quote Boullata emphasizes that *Salt Houses* gives space to personal and emotional stories often overlooked by the media. By focusing on the struggles of Palestinian families across generations, the novel not only tells a story but also brings a human dimension to political history.

Manel Shakir's *A Sky So Close to Us* transport readers to the Syria of yesteryear (2019). According the reviewer, Ujayli creates a sentimental tribute to pre-war Syria by deftly alternating between places and eras. They emphasize how the author skillfully and passionately depicts the perceptual and emotional landscape of Raqqa and Aleppo, portraying rooftops, clock towers, and cafes as cultural and memory anchors rather than merely as locations.

“She writes a love letter to the country as her character recalls life in Raqqa... She recollects the neighborhoods and the stores, the Bab Al-Faraj clock tower and the landmarks that make up Aleppo's historic city... The deterioration begins as suddenly in her body as it did in her country.” (Manal Shakir, 2019, Para 3).

*A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) is extremely nonlinear novel, according to Cynthia A. Graham's review *A Sky So Close to Us: A Novel* (2019) sees it as a portrait gallery a collection of emotionally charged highlighting shared experiences of identity, memory, and loss, rather than following a traditional plot.

“A Sky So Close to US is not a traditional tale...It is a nonlinear story that is more like walking through portrait gallery...It is the history, not of one person but of many persons.” (Cynthia A. Graham,2019, Para.9)

Sarah Chaban Chaouch in *The Various Representations of the Intellectual in Shahla Ujayli's A Sky So Close to Us* (2019), shows how Ujayli portrays intellectuals through exile, illness, and trauma, using memory and narrative to preserve identity, while presenting Shahla as a meta-intellectual for her scholarly depth and layered storytelling.

“This article examines the various representations of the intellectual in Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019). It investigates the portrayal of both male female intellectuals in the novel...and does not only uncover

exilic intellectual ... into others Emersonians characters. It reveals how the latter follow Ralph Waldo Emerson's life; thus, Emerson's representation of the intellectual is also required for the analysis." (Sarah Chabane Chaouch. 2019, P. 47).

## **2. Issue and working hypothesis**

From the above review of the literature, Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) have been examined from various critical approaches. There is no comparative research study that particularly addresses the interconnected themes of Palestinian displacement, identity crisis, and belonging. In fact, both narratives depict Palestinians' displacement as a significant theme. They also explore its impact on the second and third generations. These generations grapple with an identity crisis because they are torn between remembering, reinventing, belonging, and alienation. Displacement is depicted in these novels as a persistent and enduring condition that has a significant impact on the lives of the protagonists as well as their perceptions of themselves, their families, and their sense of place. Across generations, relocation becomes a common experience that has serious emotional and psychological consequences. Identity and belonging become ambiguous and variable when a stable homeland is lost. Palestinian displacement, according to Alyan and Ujayli, is a constant reality that constantly shapes and reconstructs identity and belonging. This creates a continuous conflict for the descendants as they try to build a renewed sense of self and identity.

## **3. Methodological Outline**

This research study investigates Palestinians' displacement and continuous struggles in diaspora in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019). In this dissertation, we have followed the **IMRAD** methodology. This research opens with an introduction where we stated the aim of the study, which is followed by the review of

the literature, issue and working hypothesis, and methodological outline. The second part is **Methods and Materials**. In the Methods, we explain that Edward Said's *Out of place* and Amin Maalouf's *In the name of identity*. This part introduces theories and their main key concepts, especially displacement, identity crisis and exile. In the Materials, we introduce the historical background, biography of Alyan and Ujayli, and synopsis of both narratives. The Result section aims to reveal the main results and findings. The discussion is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, we examine the impact of Colonialism on the first generation of Palestinians. In the second, we analyze the second and third generations with Identity crisis. In the conclusion, we summarize our key findings from the comparative study.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1. Methods

#### a. Edward Said's *Out of Place* (1999)

*Out of Place* (1999) written by Edward Said that is a deeply personal analysis of his childhood, which was defined by identity struggles, cultural displacement, and belonging. Said, who was born in Jerusalem and grew up in Cairo and Lebanon, portrays his raising as a Christian-Arab in British colonial environments, regularly feeling isolated in both the Middle Eastern and Western Worlds, by explaining the concept of Orientalism and the idea "the Other" by sharing his own life story instead of just using theory. He talks about how he always felt caught between different cultures- Arab, American, Palestinian, and English. This feeling of not fully belonging helps us understand how Orientalism works. Said points out that Orientalism creates fixed ideas about Arabs and the East. Because of these ideas, people often saw him as *the Other*, someone who did not fit what they expected. In this memoir, feeling *Out of Place* shows how Western views label Eastern people as different, separate, and not fully understood. Said also concentrates on the historical and political outcome of colonialism and geopolitical dispute in Palestine. In simpler terms, Edward Said underlines the influence of colonialization on Palestinians' diaspora.

In his autobiography, Said examines colonialism and how his encounter of displacement, migration, and cultural division considerably impacted his sense of self shaped by a strong attachment. He is represented in the memoir as a postcolonial figure conflicted between Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and the West, resulting in disjointed, *Out of Place* identified by divided loyalties and cultural discord. Said asserts how colonialism enforced Western selves on oppressed populations, suppressing narrative ones, which played a role in his own identity issue as he managed being an Arab-Christian with foreign education and nationality. He suggests that: "I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities mostly in

conflict with each other-all of my life, together with and acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so one". (Said, 1999, p.5). This quote emphasizes Said's profound struggle over fragmented identities and his desire for a clear consistent identity.

Said also draws attention to how colonialization meaningfully shaped his education and linguistic system, which contributed to his complex sense of self and lasting feeling of displacement. His schooling at Cairo's Victoria College was strongly based in British imperial principles, which prioritized English over Arabic and its heritage. The educational program omitted Arab history and traditions and discouraged communicating Arabic with the aim of promote British-minded attitudes with the children. He argues that:" The school was not interesting as a place of learning but it gave me my first extended contact with colonial authority in the sheer Englishness of its teachers and many of its students," (Said, 1999, p.42). As a result of this quote, Said faced powerful inner conflict, even though becoming skilled in the language of occupiers. English, he not really possessed it as his own by recognizing: "I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt." (Said, 1999, P .03).

In Edward Said's autobiography *Out of Place* (1999), restoring expression and individuality returning a population exiled and voiceless through colonial occupation. His in conclusion, Edward Said changes his own displacement in the form of a powerful exploration of the Palestinian exile confirms the resilience of a broken but continuing national awareness, additionally proving to the intense mental and political damages produced by displacement. He asserts that: "the Palestinian diaspora's right to identity, history, and return by entwining memory, loss, and resistance in a global postcolonial discourse" (Said, 1999, p. 217). This rephrasing indicates that Said, by using *Out of Place*, offers an ethical and scholarly

expression for Palestinian living in exile through memory, loss, and resilience. By locating these conditions under a global international postcolonial theoretical lens, Said links the Palestinian resistance with various legacies of colonial domination, exile, and restoration of belonging; hence offering Palestinian diaspora a broader perspective throughout comparative literary discourse and ideology.

**b. Amin Maalouf's *In the name of identity Violence and the need to belong (1998)***

Amin Maalouf's *In the name of identity: Violence and the need to belong* is written in French in 1998. Amin Maalouf is a theorist, who studied sociology and economic in Beirut University. He was born in Lebanon and lived in France for several years. His life experiences in two countries pushed him to write about identity crisis, as he is an Arabic-French and a Lebanese Christian. He discusses identity crisis that several displaced people experience in the host country.

According to Amin Maalouf's 1998 book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, identity is a complex concept made up of many interconnected affiliations. Conceptualizes identity as a multilayered construct composed of numerous, intersecting affiliations. He argues that these affiliations are neither fixed nor hierarchically stable. In a similar, modern research that interacts with Amin's paradigm emphasizes the composite nature of identity, viewing it as an emergent product of cultural, historical, and interpersonal forces. These debates illuminate how individuals manage the complex negotiation between modern demands for inclusion, mobility, and belonging, and the enduring pull of inherited or deeply rooted allegiances. Such analyses reaffirm Amin's central claim that identity is best understood as a dynamic, context dependent process rather than a singular is supported by these investigations.

In addition to this, Amin Maalouf explains that a person's identity is made up of many different parts that change depending on the situation. Identity is not fixed; it shifts as people respond to different moments and social pressures. This idea connects with theories of cultural hybridity and post-colonial identity, which also show that identity is formed through mixing cultures, histories, and experiences, especially in societies shaped by colonization. Thinkers like Homi Bhabha argue that people often live "in between" cultures, and this hybrid space influences how they understand themselves. When combined with Amin's view, these theories show that identity is always in motion, shaped by both modern expectations and older attachments. Amin Maalouf also warns that misunderstanding or forcing identity can lead to conflict and violence, while recognizing its complexity can encourage more peaceful forms of belonging.

In *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan, acculturation is a central theme that reflects how displacement and migration shape identity across generation. Each member of this generation of the Yacoub family struggle to adapt to new cultures while because they forced to move from Palestine to various countries, including Kuwait, Lebanon, and the United States. So, each generation experienced the sense of adapting new cultures by trying to keep their native Palestinian culture. For example, Alia as their mother resists complete adaption because she fears of losing her Palestinian identity. While, the degree of cultural changes experienced by her children and grandchildren differ, for example: Souad embraces elements of western society while living in America, but she conflicted about her longing for her native country, Hala depicts acculturation as a source of identity struggle as well as a survival strategy through these individuals.

According to Amin Maalouf, there are both opportunities and confusion in the host nation. While adjusting to a new society that frequently demands assimilation, the immigrant maintains memories, language, and customs from their native country. One feels both

enriched by new experiences and homesick for what was lost, which leads to a perpetual conflict between belonging and detachment. According to Maalouf, identity should not be boiled down to a single place of origin; rather, the host nation should be viewed as a place where various possessions can coexist. Thus, it is a complex sense that simultaneously combines exclusion and renewal, distance and discovery, and loss and gain.

According to Amin Maalouf, Identity crisis occurs when people are compelled to choose between aspects of their belonging rather than appreciating the diversity of their multiple identities. *In the name of identity: Violence and the Need to belong*, he contends that individuals are composed of various connections, including cultural, linguistic, religious, and national, that conflict arises when they are pressured by society or politics to adopt a single label. Because the self is fractured when one component of identity is denied, this crisis leads to tension, feelings of exclusion, and occasionally violence. Maalouf believes that acknowledging identity as composite and fluid rather than fixed or unique is the key to overcoming the issue. In the same vein, he adds, “I scour my memory to find as many ingredients of my identity as I can” (Maalouf,2000, p.06-07).

Amin Maalouf defines a displaced person’s identity as a “complex identity” because the individual has different allegiances. He explains that his allegiances come from his belonging, language, beliefs, family, art, and taste. Amin Maalouf says, “Each person’s identity is made up of a number of affiliations, and this is what makes each of us unique. Identity is not given once and for all; it is built up and changes throughout a person’s lifetime. There are allegiances linked to birthplace, to culture, to language, to religion, to social class, to personal choices ...” (Maalouf,2000, p.02-03). Amin Maalouf explains that identity is shaped a person’s birthplace, culture, language, religion and even personal decisions. Since two people cannot have the same combination of these factors. Add to that, the identity dynamic, it changes through the new experiences of life.

In Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses*, the Yacoub family embodies Amin Maalouf's theory of identity, where the tension between inherited bonds and the evolving self in the present becomes a central source of conflict. He navigates the upheavals of displacement and his rootedness in the soil as a farmer, illuminating the tension between a sense of belonging, adaptation, and exile. Amin Maalouf's observation that "every individual is a meeting ground for many different allegiances" (Maalouf, 2000, p.07), a statement that highlights the layered and intersecting nature of identity. Maalouf deepens this idea when he adds that "every one of my allegiances links me to a larger number of people, but the more ties I have, the rarer and more particular my own identity becomes" (Maalouf, 2000, p.07). These two reflections illustrate that identity cannot be reduced to a single origin or belonging; instead, it is shaped through the accumulation of cultural, familial, national, and personal ties. Maalouf's own example drawing from his Arab heritage, Christian faith, and French influences, demonstrates how multiple allegiances coexist to create a unique and evolving sense of self.

## 2. Materials

### a. The Historical Background of *Salt Houses*:

*Salt Houses*, a novel by Palestinian- American writer Hala Alyan published in 2017, traces the experiences of the Yacoub family across four generations, exploring the effects of displacement, war, and exile. Set against key historical events including the 1948 Palestinian displacement, the novel reflects the political and social upheavals that shaped the Palestinian families, Hala vividly illustrates how historical events intertwine with personal and collective memory, identity, and the struggle to preserve a sense of home.

However, the novel dramatizes how successive geographical ruptures of the Yacoub family in relation to the broader historical currents that have shaped Palestinian displacement, starting with the post 1948 reconfigurations of Palestinian life and intensified by the 1967 occupation, the mass expulsion from Kuwait in 1990, and later conflicts across the Middle East inscribe themselves onto the private sphere rather than directly recounting political history. Alyan's portrayal of multigenerational emigration highlights how historical crises build up as layers of inherited loss that shape identity, memory, and cultural continuity rather than existing as discrete events. The family's travels through Nablus, Kuwait, Amman, Beirut and other places reveal the unexpected belonging: homes, identities, and even futures are at risk of disintegrating in a setting that is frequently upended by conflict and forced emigration.

To sum up, *Salt Houses* illustrates how Palestinian life unfolds through continual current of exile, demonstrating that exile is a continuous state rather than a singular occurrence, Hala demonstrates how historical instability continuously alters identity, memory, and the concept of home by tracking the Yacoub family through decades of conflict and emigration.

**b. The historical Background of *A Sky So Close to Us* :**

Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us*, examines how personal lives are intertwined with historical upheaval, portraying the experience of displacement and exile has long shaped the literature of the Middle East, reflecting the struggles of individuals and families across generations. Published in 2018, Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* exemplifies this literary exploration, following Syrian and Palestinian characters whose lives are profoundly affected by war.

Shahla Ujayli skillfully integrates the personal lives of her characters into the expansive and stormy landscape of Middle Eastern history in *A Sky So Close to Us*. The novel explores how war, exile, and political upheaval affect memory and identity across generations, from Aleppo in 1947 to the dark streets of Raqqa under ISIS. Travels to Raqqa, the US, and other places show the enduring draw of diaspora, while the Palestinian thread that runs through the story emphasizes the family of home. The delicate tension between loss and resiliency is captured in Ujayli's prose, demonstrating how personal experiences are never isolated but rather are intricately linked to the forces of history, displacement, and the constant reshaping of belonging.

In conclusion, *A Sky So Close to Us* illuminates how historical upheavals, displacement, and political instability shape individual and collective identities across generations. Through the journeys of Syrian and Palestinian characters, Ujayli demonstrates that exile and war leave enduring marks on memory, belonging, and the sense of home. By tracing these motions across cities and continents, literally the novel portrays the fragility and resilience of human life facing constant historical upheaval.

## **b. Biography of Hala Alyan**

Hala Alyan is a clinical psychologist, poet, and writer of Palestinian and American descent. She was born into a Palestinian family in the United States of America in 1986, and she was graduated from Rutgers University with a doctorate in clinical psychology. She is most known of her critically acclaimed novel *Salt Houses*, although she has also released three poetry collections. She grew up in a household of storytellers, and the Palestinian diaspora, identity, and displacement are all explored in her literature. In her books, Hala Alyan depicts the effects of war and the Palestinian people's tenacity in attempting to maintain their identity while living in exile. She has received numerous honors for her exceptional creative work, including the 2013 Arab American Book Award for her collection of poems, *ATRIUM* in 2012; her first her full-length poetry collections about diaspora, identity, home and memory, and her novel *Salt Houses* in 2018, some of her novels: *Hijra*, *The Moon That Turns You Back* 2024, *The Astronists City in 202*. All these novels deal with the generational family that explores the themes of identity loss, diaspora of the Palestinian family, memory, displacement and exile.

## **c. Synopsis of *Salt Houses***

*Salt Houses* is a sophisticated novel written in 2018 by Hala Alyan. It follows the story of four generations of the fictional Palestinian middle-class family, the Yacoubs. Beginning in 1963 and concluding in 2014, Alyan details the family 's journey through the Six Day War (1967), the First Intifada (1987), the Gulf War (1990), the Second Intifada (2000),9/11(2001), and the 2006 Lebanon War. Besides, the novel relates the experiences of four generations of the Palestinian Yacoub family who originally from Jaffa city, it begins from 1963 until 2014, from the preparation of Alia's wedding to Atef in Nablus after the Nakba 1948 the Israeli state

formation. So, the first-generation Salma and her husband Hussein are forced to displace from Jaffa to Nablus with their three children Mustapha, Alia, and Widad.

In 1967 as the war of six day, the Israeli Civil War between Israel and Palestinian people. Meanwhile, Mustapha and his friend Atef are arrested by Jewish forces because they were joined the Palestinian resistance. In other parts of the novel, Salma has to flee to Amman and settled there after she Widowed, her husband Hussein died in Palestine. Later, Alia and Atef joined her married sister in Kuwait, hence, they settle there and got three children Karam, Souad, and Riham. As the Iraqi invasion by Sadeem Hussein of Kuwait in 1990, Alia and Atef they have to move once again to Amman and settle there with their three children. After years, Karam is sent from Amman to Boston to continue his studies abroad and now he will have to deal with a different culture, while his sister Souad is sent to Paris and married with her best friend Elie. After years of divorce, she also joins her brother Karam in Boston. Contrary to them, their sister Riham marries a Jordanian man and prefers to settle in Amman with him. Years later, Souad and her children, Manar and Zain, head back to Beirut where they are joined every summer.

#### **d. Shahla Ujayli's Biography**

Shahla Ujayli is a Syrian educator with a PhD in Arabic language and literature. At the American University of Aleppo, she has taught contemporary Arabic literature. *The Cat's Eye* (2006), *Persian Carpet* (2013), *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019), and *Summer with the Enemy* (2018) are her four notable novels. She is also a popular novelist. Her first book earned the Jordan State Award for Literature, and her most recent novel won the Arabic Booker Prize, among other honors. Her skill as a writer is demonstrated by the short story collections she has released, such as "The Mashrabivva", in addition to her novels.

The main focus of Shahla Ujayli's novels is the impact of conflict and the Syrian crisis on individuals and society. They depict the suffering and difficulties faced by those who are compelled to relocate far from home in search of a purpose in life. She also examines personal issues in her novels, such as disease and emotional distress during difficult times. She criticizes societal and political corruption, particularly from the perspectives of women, and discusses people's decisions and the loss of community in unconventional and humorous ways in *A Bed for the King's Daughter* (2021). Her stories and novels reflect on many themes we mention identity and memory, face the brutal realities of political violence, and develop empathy while connecting personal and multigenerational stories to significant historical events like the 1948 Nakba.

### **e Synopsis of *A Sky So Close to Us***

Shahla Ujayli's novel *A Sky So Close to us* chronicles the experiences of multiple generations coping with exile, love, and loss. As her sisters continue to be enmeshed in the Syrian conflict, it centers on Joumane Badran, a Syrian residing in Amman, Jordan, who works for a humanitarian organization. Her closest companion is Nasser Al-Amrieh who is a Syrian- Palestinian exilic character and a divorcee, with whom she forms a deep bond to realize that their families were neighbors in Syria. Nasser's family has experienced a lengthy history of displacement, it has had move many times because of war and danger. This has become a big part of their life and identity. But unlike others, Dr. Nasser does not see moving as a sad thing, he actually likes it because it gives him a chance to find a safe place where he can live comfortably. Joumane is a cancer patient who meets Dr. Yacoub Sharif and Haniyah, who are from Palestinian origins. Through a non-linear narrative, the novel recounts the history of Palestine, starting from 1948 Nakba, to recounts Sharif's displacement. On one hand, Dr. Yaacoub's family is educated, but exile still brings him emotional pain and struggle,

his identity is shaped by inner conflict and a deep sense of loss and unhappiness. On the other hand, Haniyah's family struggle and their traditional shaped her strength but also bring her sorrow, profoundly influencing her identity.

### III Results

This section introduces the findings of our comparative analysis of Hala Ayans's *Salt Houses* (2017) and Shahla Ujayli's *a Sky So Close to Us* (2019). This analysis demonstrates the profound and enduring impact of colonialism and key historical events: including the 1948 Nakba and the 1967 war on Palestinian diaspora. Both novels present forced relocation as a continuous changing experience that significantly affects the protagonists' alienations to place, sense of belonging, and sense of self rather than as single terrible event. The stories illustrate how Palestinians face the difficulties of forming their identities in the face of displacement and the ongoing erasure of their homeland through this perspective. The homes that the characters formerly called home are now only preserved in photographs, recollections, or as ruins. As a result, their families, customs, and tales provide them with comfort. This provides children with an identity that is influenced by both change and memories.

As the turning point in the Yacoub family's dissolution. After being forced to relocate from Jaffa to Nablus signifying the beginning of their social and emotional fragmentation, Salma starts her family's long exile. They have to repeatedly restart in unfamiliar and challenging environments as a result of this colonial displacement, which causes them to lose their sense of safety and cultural connection. However, the 1948 Nakba is shown in more moderate manner in *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019), however the story feels the impact of it. Without considering of not having individually lived through the Nakba, Haniya and Dr. Yacoub are still affected emotionally by it and there are families who experienced it. This demonstrates how colonial violence impacts following generations much later the initial event and how the suffering of displacement is transmitted.

The 1967 war is depicted in *Salt Houses* (2018) as another difficult period that makes living much harder for Palestinians. Because of the continuous occupation and conflict, the

family must displace once more, from Kuwait at this stage, illustrating that no location feels completely safe. They look to their family, identity, and remembrances for purpose. While in the novel *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019), describes the years following 1967 as a peaceful political era during which he feels isolated from ideals of nationalism. He struggles to maintain his Palestinian identity while contemporaneously emotionally detaching himself in order to survive.

In both narratives, the contemporary era reveals that individuals now face profoundly emotional and fundamental challenges, not only physical hardships. In spite of living in different parts of the Middle East and the West in *Salt Houses* (2017), Manar and Linah feel less a part of a culture and more like they have lost their home. They do not sense like they belong anywhere since they are torn between two realities. Haniyah's sickness and emotional detachment in *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) highlight the pain she endures and the removal of Arab and Palestinian voices. Both stories reveal how personal identity is shaped by displacement and the continuous struggle to protect cultural traditions.

## **IV. Discussion**

### **Chapter One: Colonialism and its Impact on Palestinians in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us***

This chapter approaches Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* through a literary lens, focusing on how both authors transform experiences of rupture and displacement into intimate narratives of identity. In *Salt Houses*, Hala reveals how the Yacoub family navigates the emotional aftermath of dislocation, using memory, storytelling, and family bonds as quiet acts of recovering the self. Likewise, Ujayli's portrayal of the Sharif family highlights how characters cope with the wounds of uprooting, turning to inner resilience, attachment, and imagination as ways to mend fractured identities. Together, the two novels create a literary space in which exile is not only a condition of loss, but also a process of rebuilding where healing emerges slowly through connection, memory, and the search for a stable sense of self.

#### **1. Colonialism and the Displacement of the First Generation in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses***

The events of Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) start in the early 1960s. It represents the presence of Israeli occupation in Palestine and its detrimental effects on Palestinians. It represents the displacement of Palestinians, causing the dispossession of numerous Palestinians of their lands and homes. Put differently, the novel recounts the impact of the Arab-Israeli war on Palestinians, as they were obliged to leave either their city or their country. The theme of forced displacement resonates deeply in the novel since it revolves around the forced displacement of Palestinian families following the creation of the state of Israel. Alyan describes the Yacoub family, a Palestinian family, that faces brutal discrimination by the Israeli occupation.

Before the 1960s, the Yacoub family was a wealthy family in Jaffa, Palestine. They have lost everything in the aftermath of the Israeli occupation. In this sense, the narrator argues, “But it was gone, the old tray and coffee set, along with so many of their belongings, the dresses and walnut furniture and Hussam’s books. All left behind in that villa, painted the color of peach flesh, that had been their home” (Alyan, 2017, p.01). This passage illustrates the loss of home and belongings due to the colonial occupation and forced displacement. This incident unveils the family’s first displacement. Hence, from the opening of the narrative, Salma and her husband, Hussam, were forced to leave their home and relocate in another city, Nablus. The narrator writes, “They moved to Nablus, a city of hills and stone, a place that was not home but would have to do” (Alyan, 2017, p.06).

The narrator describes the family’s displacement to Nablus not only as a geographical movement but also a deep emotional and cultural dislocation. This illustrates that forced displacement has a detrimental impact on the family, as they have to live in a place which is “not home” (Alyan, 2017, p.06). In the same vein, the narrator writes, “They’d lost everything in Jaffa- furniture, house, status- and now they were losing their children to foreign cities” (Alyan, 2017, p. 9-10). This Palestinian family was expelled from Jaffa and had to move to Nablus. Simply put, Israeli occupation involved the depopulation of numerous Palestinians from their villages and towns. Consequently, the Yacoub family was dispossessed of their land, house, and furniture. This action unveils the negative impact of Israeli occupation on Palestinian families during the 1960s. This passage highlights the hardship endured by the Yacoub family under colonial domination. Later, Hard events happened for the Yacoub family, along with numerous other Palestinian refugees, were displaced to Nablus as the Palestinian narrator Kanafani (1978) expresses in his book

I was sure that God we had known in Palestine had left it too, and was a refugee in some place which did not know, unable to find solution to his own problems. And we, human refugees, sitting on the pavement waiting for a

new fate to bring some solution, were responsible for providing a roof under which we spend the night. (Kanafani, 1978, p.05)

However, The Yacoub family faced forced displacement to Nablus in 1960, leading Salma to force Alia, her the eldest daughter, to marry Atef because he lives in Kuwait. Salma grapples with displacement for the second time, as she has to leave Palestine. Unlike Salma's youngest daughter. Upon the coming of the guests to Salma's house to see Alia, women read a cup of coffee in the eve of Alia's wedding. They read Alia's unsettled life in the future. The narrator argues that "She sees crossed knives, crumbling houses, and the image of a Zebra" (Alyan, 2017, p.01). This accepts the Zebra signs in the cup of Coffee symbolizes the instability of her future life unveils that Alia will face various harsh experiences in her future life, including displacement and loss of houses. Hence, Salma has chosen to keep the prediction to herself. The narrator continues, "When Salma peers into her daughter's coffee cup, she knows instantly she must lie" (Alyan, 2017, p. 01). This example reveals that Salma does not want to inform her daughter, Alia, about her predicted future.

However, Salma, along with her family members, experienced a harsh life during the Israeli war of 1967. This war lasted for Six days and caused an involuntary displacement by the Israeli settlers. Alyan describes Atef and Mustapha's participation in the Palestinian resistance, Unfortunately, they are arrested on the fifth day of the 1967 war. Alyan illustrates the military is attacking the civilians:

"The soldiers call to one another in Hebrew. There are seven or eight of them... Mustapha frowns, gazing in the direction of the soldiers. A look of comprehension dawns upon his face... Suddenly Atef's is in a dim room, his wrists in handcuffs. Across the table sits a soldier with a scar above his lips" (Alyan, 2017, p.73).

However, beginning of Intifada against Isreal military, war between these protests enraged the occupying forces, who responded with brutal and bloody attacks against the Palestinian people. The narrator Hala Alyan depicts effects of the Yacoub family's multiple displacements on their dispersal. Atef is released from the jail after the war. The narrator

writes, “The six- day war was over and Atef had been released from prison, stumblingly finding his way to Amman, where he stayed with khalto Salma for a few days before continuing to Kuwait, the tawny desert” (Alyan ,2018, p.74). This quote highlights the forced migration that shadows the Palestinian people, as they are compelled to leave their beloved country and become refugees.

However, the search for belonging for the Yacoub family traces both emotional struggle with their Palestinian identity and their cultural sense. Hence, the displacement in this novel from the forced migration for the Yacoub family from Jaffa to Nablus by the Israeli forces traces the beginning of fragmentation and the instability of their homeland; As the characters from the first generation: Salma and her husband Hussam with their three children Alia, Mustapha, and Widad, are obliged to face a hard reality that started by a simple displacement from Jaffa to Nablus, causes them the struggle with their inner emotions and memories’ to the feeling of nostalgia by being far from Jaffa by the feeling of losing their homes, and the inability to defeat their rule by going back to their destroyed houses. As Afrah Abduljabbar Abdulsahib “Displacement and Homelessness in Hala Alyan’s Novel *Salt Houses*” ,Middle East Journal of language and literature studies, 2025 “Displacement in *Salt Houses* is not merely geographical but psychological, leaving characters perpetually searching for belonging” in her studies according to *Salt Houses* she argues that the displacement of Yacoub Family is not only viewed as a geographical displacement but also it is deeper than that because the Yacoub Family as the experience of the loss and the instability .

Yet, the forced migration will continue by the Israeli forces, they will force them to migrate again due to the war to other countries causes the instability for the Yacoub Family. Since, they live in Nablus and their home is disrupted again. Alia’s brother Mustapha is arrested and jailed during Palestinian manifestations serve as a metaphor for how the war damages the countryside and the loss of the family bonds. Alyan used this instance to

demonstrate how history leaves its mark on individual memory, sowing the seeds of exile and sorrow that character's bear long after the conflict.

## **2. Colonialism and the Displacement of the First Generation in Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us***

Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* portrays the forced displacement of thousands of Palestinians following the 1948 Nakba. These Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homeland during the creation of the state of Israel. It describes the emotional and psychological consequences of displacement on Palestinians. *A Sky So Close to Us* is a historical novel that describes the coming of Israelis occupation and its impact on characters' personal and intimate stories. It represents the dislocation of the first generation of Palestinians to other places, especially the Sharifs. These families were dispossessed from their lands and homes without having the right to come back. Ujayli depicts this incident as a current reality that has a significant impact on her characters' lives rather than as a remote past. Rupture, exile, and longing define the Palestinian experience in the narrative.

In 1948, the Sharifs' family faced involuntary displacement along with other Palestinian families. They were dispossessed of their lands and houses because of the colonial occupation. A novelist reported: "In the novel, Dr. Nasser's family is dispossessed from their country, Palestine, because of Israelis occupation in 1947". And he adds: "Yacoub's family settle in Jordan and become part of it; this explains that the Sharifs also have to cope and become members of the society". (Chabane,2022, p. 57-59). This is due to the displacement of Dr. Nasser's family during the Israeli occupation in 1947 highlights the severe agony of losing one's identity and one's hometown. While, Yacoub's family, who is relocates to Jordan, serves as an example of how Palestinians adjust and reestablish a sense of identity while living in exile. By using this contrast, Ujayli draws attention to the two consequences of

displacement: the intense pain of being separated and the tenacious strength of memory and identity maintained inside the diaspora. She enables colonial history to develop in intimate, human terms. Palestinians' memories of the lost land and severed roots are neither abstract nor purely personal. She keeps bringing up the subject of Palestinian dispossession, the impossibility of going back to villages that were taken and destroyed, and the ongoing alienation brought about by colonial occupation in her novel. By incorporating the political act of expulsion with her character's own emotional ties, Ujayli turns colonial cruelty into a lived reality. (Ujayli, Shahla, 2019, 76)

The representation of Yarmouk refugee camp in the narrative signifies the lasting hardship of exile locating the protagonists' difficulties inside a broader depiction of displacement and detriment. In this context, Joumane writes, "The refugees were ordinary people; they were rich and have lost everything, such as jobs and houses, because of war. (Chabane ,2022, p.51). This example suggests that wars in the Arab world destroyed the lives of many people. Even the wealthy and powerful people could not survive, as they lost their homes, jobs, and riches. Hence, Joumane Badran, the narrator of the novel, shows that numerous people face forced displacement in the contemporary world.

Ujayli portrays how the primary action of displacement impacts during long periods, resulting in existences conflicted between endurance by describing the harsh situations of such zones, especially the devastations of Yarmouk in Jordan, and there are others refuges that come from Palestine and Syria. The refuge symbolizes the permanent results of Israeli occupation policies, which rejected Palestinian and permanence in along with homeland. (Ujayli,2019, p.187). *A Sky So Close to Us* shows how colonial history and the Palestinian situation are inextricably linked. Village destruction, family expulsion, and exile are all emphasized in the narrative as defining truths rather than incidentals. By transforming the abstract concept of colonialism into the tangible, lived realities of her characters, Ujayli

makes sure that readers understand the lasting effects of Israeli occupation as well as its human cost.

Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* (2019) depicts exile as a permanent reality for Palestinian displaced people, rather than a transient occurrence. Ujayli portrays the deep emotional and social effects of relocation, including the agony of losing one's home, the difficulty of maintaining a feeling of belonging, and the sadness of loss. The first-generation of Palestinian refugees are given a voice in Ujayli's narrative, since she draws on the family's history of forced relocation and the Nakba. Her art effectively conveys how individual and societal experiences of relocation and loss mold identities, preserve homecoming memories, and engender the unwavering desire to eventually return. By combining storytelling, music, family get-togethers and traditional customs, she emphasizes the tenacity and will of people who have experienced forced exile.

Colonialism appears in Ujayli's story as a deep rift ingrained in Palestinian heritage rather than merely as a sequence of historical occurrences. Moreover, to being depicted as a political downfall, 1948 displacement of the first generation is also viewed as the separation of family heritage and a sense of self. With the Balfour Declaration and the motivation of Jewish Emigration functioning as the setting for exclusion and scar, her vocation expresses the uncertainty and exile that come with British domination. The several citations to fallen homeland and broken individuality expose how land expropriation and population displacement shaped everyday life in processes that went past political discourse. By showing the Nakba as an across generational pain in place of a faraway historical occurrence, Ujayli highlights how the 1948 colonial fallback was commencement instead than a termination: the beginning of banishment, removal, and a continuing conflict for cultural and personal identity.

The aftermath of the British Authority is manifested in Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us*, not just throughout political determinations, but also through the breaks and quiet moments that shape Palestinian personality. Her writings of novels show how the resolution of Palestinian organization and the support of Jewish migration operate as basic reasons of insecurity, producing in people who are profoundly displaced and suspicious of those in statuses of control. Recall functions as both a headship and a sign of association in this work, which is filled with mentions to historical violence and imposed detonations like the Lydda Death March. The impact of laws like the Absentees' property Law, which denied Palestinians the ability to return and reclaim their property, is also reflected in the story's portrayal of exile. By using individuals who struggle with the loss of home, land, and certainly, Ujayli dramatizes the consequences of these laws rather than merely describing them, turning institutional erasure into intense individual and social grief.

Through the violence committed by Zionist paramilitary groups reframed by Ujayli as enduring scars ingrained in Palestinian's grandparents as a result of displacement, rather than merely as historical facts from the pre-state era. Through the fractured recollections of grandparents, whose exile becomes a potent narrative lens, she examines the consequences of these groups rather than viewing them as simply historical players. Instead of being portrayed as singular incidents, the violent incidents are shown as triggers that reverberate over generations, impacting identity, belonging, and the fragile process of memory transmission. By doing this, Ujayli turns the historical narratives of armed conflict into a reflecting writing on the ways in which aggressiveness endures in family histories and shows up as grief, quiet, or estrangement among descendants. The narrator reported that "The village of Lydda fell into the hands of Zionist paramilitary gangs on Friday, July 9, 1948. Gunmen broke into people's houses with butts, of their rifles and expelled the occupation from them ... center of the town" (Ujayli, 2016, p.173). This excerpt shows that Palestinians were forcibly

driven from their houses by Zionist paramilitary forces during the 1948 fall of Lydda. The reference to rifle butts highlights the attack's savagery, while the town center's emphasis symbolizes the disintegration of the neighborhood. This scene is used by Ujayli to connect the trauma they continue to face from displacement with historical atrocities. Consequently, the first generation of Palestinians were displaced due to violent ethnic restoration activities. The trauma, displacement, and historical atrocities these three frequently noticed or survived massacres and ruthless attacks intended to indelicate and remove Palestinians.

The 1948 forced deportation of Palestinians from Lydda was largely carried out by Zionist paramilitary groups. The narrator claims that "the square was packed with people from Lydda along with refugee who had fled there from other region in Palestine, searching for safety" (Ujayli, 2019, p. 173). This quotation highlights the displacement of Palestinians during Nakba. Ujayli's description of the plaza as "packed" depicts the huge number of Palestinians, from different cities and towns, who were compelled to congregate in one place in search of safety. These families had to abandon their homes and means of subsistence because of the constant fear of violence. The phrase "searching for safety" emphasizes their vulnerability and the disintegration of daily life. Thus, the passage represents not only the Palestinians' physical displacement but also the common emotions of terror, uncertainty, and despair that characterized their exile. Intimidation and force were used during the removal: Palestinians were acquired and following some resistance, made to March 10 to 15 miles on foot in difficult conditions, which resulted in hundreds of deaths, primarily from tiredness and thirst. Zionist menaces, attacks, and direct military action Palestinian villages and towns were part of broader plan to transfer Arabs from areas meant for the Jewish state.

Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us* narrates the story of Palestinian first generation, who faced forced displacement from their ancestral land in Palestine. They initially resided in the urban center of Lydda, a setting that assume a key role to the history of exile throughout 1948

Nakba. Lydda is firmly established in the legacy of aggression of colonialism and the behaviors of Zionist paramilitary forces. Instead of illustrating their exile as a marginalized household crisis, Ujayli locates within the frontier setting of British Mandate. These politics allowed the organization, arming, and training of groups such as the Palmach and the Haganah, which played key roles in operations like the 1948 “operation Dani”, during which tens of thousands of Palestinians were violently removed from Lydda and Ramallah. The brutality of these events marked by forced demonstrations, shootings, and risks presented via amphibious and aircraft left the grandparents with no choice but to flee leaving behind their homes, community, and sense of society. (Ujayli, 2019, p.173).

In Ujayli’s *A Sky So Close to Us*, Palestinian grandparents who were displaced suffered a great deal of suffering and disruption. They had to leave their villages, houses, and fields, carrying only what they could carry. Conflict’s pervasive effects were demonstrated by the large number of Palestinians who were forced into overcrowded refugee camps in the west bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The uncertainty and fragility of life in exile are reflected in these camps, which provide only the most basic necessities, such as food, clean water, minimal shelters or concrete structures, and limited medical treatment. In contrast to the modest but secure lives their grandparents led in tiny towns and villages as farmers, shopkeepers or artisans, displacement exposed them to poverty, reliance on help, and the humiliation of strangers in foreign countries. Through sharing stories about their homes and orchards, teaching their kids about their heritage, and preserving keys or paperwork from their original properties, they made an effort to preserve their culture and dignity in spite of these obstacles. These operations perform how identity, endurance, and belonging survive regardless difficulty and displacement. (Sayigh, Rosemary, 1979, p.70).

The Palestinian earliest generation was sentimentally suppressed by intense misery and a longing to return. The actuality they were presently enduring displaced was largely

unrecognized. They evolve into social logos of resiliency and memory, habitually behaving as a transformation between the past and the future for new generation. Their experience shaped a well-established persona founded on determination and agony, there were important continuing impacts. Their children and grandchildren had legal, economic, and educational obstacles in their host countries while developing nationless. Generations of families were affected by the sense of displacement, which shaped their attachment to the land they come from, their rights, and their self-perception. The outcome was a durable national and humanitarian problem that now influenced millions of people, in addition to being a personal heartache for each family. (Atallah, Devin G, 2017, p. 357).

The desire and loss-shaped curriculum that the grandparents leave for their kids like the character of Dr. Yacoub's mother is shown as having both symbolic resonance and emotional depth, both a personal tragedy and depiction of more general themes of mourning, displacement and female perseverance in the face of political and societal change, especially the loss of her husband Yusuf. Hence, Nabila's desire is to change her current situation by marrying Dr. Rashid. The narrator states, she also reported: "Nabila has lost her husband Yusuf at a terrible time in a Wanoan's life. She was about forty years old, in age when every risk must be well calculated ..." (Ujayli, 2019, P.164). "It was easy for Nabila to fall in love with Dr Rachid Shihab the moment they were introduced. But what would make this esteemed man gives his heart to a woman like her, especially now that she was in her fifties." (Ujayli, 2019, p.165). These quotes are example of a combination of loss and longing that creates a guiding framework for their children characterize Nabila's existence. The difficulties presented by her age and situation, as well as the memories of her late husband, Dr. Rachid, have a significant impact on her love for him. Her son, Dr. Yacoub, learns an underlying lesson from this, seeing how grief and exile influence not only love but also individual

choices. As a result, Nabila's tale is part of the oral heritage passed down to the following generation by hearing such as a storytelling.

The displaced first generation of Palestinian transported with them quiet messages from past, teaching structured by belonging and distress. In the novel, grandparents do not always reveal their sorrow through words, but their life stories expulsion, and loss leave marks that determine the new generation. Their removal becomes a silent legacy, indirectly affecting how children and grandchildren regard themselves, create bonds, and navigate their sense of selfhood. This emphasizes how the elder's enforced displacement begins a pattern of heartache and memorialization that spreads through households, and emerges again in the second and third generation character's lives. As Raja Shehadeh notes, Palestinians "Lived in peace with the land, connected in agriculture and custom, before expulsion and broke this stability. (Shehadeh, 2007, p.19-20). This emphasizes preceding being obliged to exit, Palestinians inhabited calmly linked to their homeland by way of cultivation and cultural habits, but displacement ruined this balance. It also expresses the absence of balance belonging Palestinians faced as a result of removal: a fundamental topic in Shehadeh's work, which connects individual recollection with political condition.

To conclude, the enduring effects of colonialism, forced displacement, and belonging on Palestinian first generation are made evident in the two works. The Nakba and the ensuing confrontations Hala portrays the repeated displacement, underscoring the way colonial violence is transmitted down the generations as an ongoing sense of loss. This viewpoint is expanded by Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us*, which situates Palestinian within the broader regional unrest and shows how exile molds individual outside of the country. When seized as a complete, these parts underscore how colonialism is an ongoing condition that results in banishment, uprooting, and cultural division, while also demonstrating strength with the help of remembrance, and story protecting individuality.

## **Chapter Two: The New Generations' Struggle with Identity in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us***

This chapter investigates the experiences of younger Palestinian generations who live in exile they struggle with identity crisis. The descendants of those who were displaced in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* inherit broken histories that make it difficult for them to feel that they belong since they are torn between their new home and a homeland they have never known. *A Sky So Close to Us* by Shahla Ujayli illustrates how younger generations struggle with the weight of memory while negotiation the pressures of changing cultural identities. This chapter explores how both novels highlight the long-lasting impact of exile on identity development, demonstrating that for younger Palestinians, the difficulty is not just in recalling the past but also in redefining who they are today. Leaving them struggle between assimilation into new societies and pull of their Palestinian roots. In these two novels, the identity is not fixed, shifting by geography and history, highlighting the deep psychological impact across multigenerational.

### **1. Identity Crisis in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses***

In Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses*, after the family is displaced from Palestine during the 1948 Nakba and later conflicts, Salma is widowed and moved to Jordan but her daughter Alia and her husband join her sister Widad in Kuwait, this novel shows again how the Yacoub family is forced to move again from home and relocate in another place. During Alia living in Kuwait, she faced difficulties to assimilate to the new culture which is totally different from her homeland. She is disconnected from herself and she tries to adapt to the new environment because she feels herself alienated from her homeland while still carrying the essence of her original identity and faith, the narrator writes:

It is not that she believes Allah is vengeful or cruel. The opposite, when she thinks of Allah, she imagined only love, magnified and multiplied into a

room of marble...into her mother's voice as she prayed...Allah so dangerous, so terrifying because the sin, the real sin...No, Allah hadn't punished her out of a spite or malice. He'd been warning her not forget (Alyan, 2017, p.40).

The above excerpt shows that Alia thinks for her relationship with God when she recalls her sins. She also remembers how her mother views Allah, because he punishes her because of her sinful things. Hence, Salma used to be conservative by wearing hijabs and a religious woman. Alia sees religion a part of her identity, she practices Islam as a part of her cultures not as a religion that shows identity crisis in the life of the second generation after losing their homeland, Alia struggle with fragmented belonging by leaving homeland that she can't return to, and living in foreign countries. While, Alia tries to assimilate to Kuwaiti culture, even her identity is tied to memory, tradition, and the loss of identity. Therefore, the effect of the exile creates a struggle between the decision to keep the Palestinians traditions or adapt to new cultures in other societies, that shows the identity crisis is not tied only to Palestinian identity but also, to cultural differences: Language, values, during living in other countries. For instance, the identity crisis of the second generation is from the experience of diaspora for Palestinians makes them struggle between search for belonging to homeland or adapt to other countries.

In *Salt Houses*, Saddam Hussein's army invades of Kuwait. Hence, the Yacoub's family is forced to displace once again from Kuwait this time they choose Jordan as the same thing that happened for their grandparents in Palestine by leaving their homes, memories, schools and their jobs behind. This incident shows that the family has lost its houses because of colonialism and wars. Alia will also build another home in another country in Amman, whereas Alia with her three children live in Amman and grow up there, they found life is stable but they have never felt like home. Hence, it affords for Alia's children with a peaceful life where they can live with their own identity and culture, in this passage the narrator says, "When her grandmother taught Riham to pray year ago...As Riham stands over the prayer

rug, the curtains in her room drawn, she prefers to pray in dim light, she begins the task of trying to keep her mind pure and focused” (Alyan, 2017, p.309). She also says, “She remains in the garden for a while, thinking about Abdullallah. When she goes back inside, she crosses *chicken* off her list and writes *maqluba*” (Alyan,2017, p.310). It shows that the stability of life in Amman as the grandparents along with their children and their grandchildren can live peacefully. Therefore, Alia and Atef raise their children by trying to preserve fragments of their tradition. As the narrators Al Ramahi, Samia, & AL- Shetawi, Mahmoud F in their study *Between Rootedness and Alienation: An Ecological Reading of Hala Alyan’s Salt Houses*, AlRamahi and Al-Shetawi argue that the novel’s identity crisis emerges from the rootedness and alienation (2024). AlRamahi and AL-Shetawi contend that the ongoing conflict between alienation and rootedness is what gives rise to the identity problem in the book. The protagonists are caught between the dislocation brought on their frequent exile and displacement and their emotional devotion to Palestine as their ancestral homeland. As a result, the concept of “home” is no longer a physical, fixed location but rather a transient symbol that could vanish at any time. Because the protagonists vacillate between the inevitable alienation and adaptability in foreign countries and the need for belongings.

In August 1990, Souad navigates the uneasy atmosphere in Paris with her boyfriend Ellie, grappling with the recent invasion of Kuwait while trying to adapt her new life far from home. Riham spends her early life in Kuwait, but after the Gulf war, she moves to Amman, where she lives as an adult, embracing a conservative lifestyle. So, Riham is found engaging in her morning exercise routine in Amman, reflecting on her self-image and imaging herself as a ballet dancer, despite feeling out of shape and perhaps past her prime. Her thoughts drift to her husband who is now medical director with their son Abdullah, who has just started university the narrator says, “She likes to pretend she is a ballerina warming up before a performance, though she is over thirty and corpulent, to put it nicely. Still, she tells herself in

defiance of the body she was given” (Alyan,2017, p.303). So, Riham struggles to find a stable sense of self in Amman. Unlike her siblings, she replaces national identity with religious identity as a way to ground herself. Simply put, religion becomes her identity, she feels herself stuck between the older generation values and the new world around her. Riham asks herself, “What kind of woman am I supposed to be now?” (Alyan ,2017, p.304). Although she lives in Amman with her family never truly feels being home because she already knows about her Palestinians roots. Hence, this lack of rootedness deepens on her sense of non-belonging to anywhere: neither to Kuwait neither nor in Amman. She considered Amman as a temporary place to settle in. Subsequently, they moved to Beirut. this change represents a new displacement stage. They experienced a brief sense of stability in Amman, but Beirut brings with it both fresh opportunities and a new turbulence. The city is lively and international, provides better education for their children.

In *Salt Houses*, Karam is one of Alia and Atef’s three children, Karam experienced the Saddam Hussein ‘s invasion of Kuwait. Subsequently, he moves to Boston to pursue his studies at the university. While his sister Souad goes to Paris, his sister Siham settles in Amman with her parents. Karam’s experiences in Boston highlight the theme of searching for belonging. Therefore, he becomes somewhat assimilated into American culture, even he returns to Beirut for summers to his family, the narrator expresses “favorite topic is her two wayward children, living in a cold city across the world. Karam moved to Boston ...” (Alyan,2017, p.51). Karam lives with his Arabic wife Budur in USA. Both faced identity crisis in the novel *Salt houses* stems from growing up disconnected from his Palestinian roots. Living in western cities like Boston city seems as difficult as one’s Arab identity is often misunderstood or exoticized,

Karam from Hala Alyan’s *Salt Houses* reflects Amin Malouf’s theory of assimilation and identity as presented in *In the Name of Identity*. Malouf argues that identity is made up of

multiple layers of: culture, religion, linguistics, and that assimilation can become destructive when individuals are pressured to erase parts of themselves to belong. Similarly, Karam, growing up in the United States after his family's displacement, struggles to reconcile his Arab heritage with the American culture surrounding him. In his attempt to assimilate, he distances himself from his family's traditions and roots, seeking acceptance in a society that often views his background as foreign. This internal conflict mirrors Maalouf's idea that forced assimilation fragments one's sense of self, leading to a loss of richness and authenticity in identity. Through Karam, Alyan illustrates the painful consequences of assimilation that Maalouf warns against the disconnection from one's origins in pursuit of belonging. Karam from Hala Alyan 's Salt Houses shows the struggle of identity that Amin Maalouf describes in *In the Name of Identity*. Maalouf explains that when people try to fully assimilate into another culture, they often lose part of who they are. He writes, "Each person's identity is made up of many elements...and if one of those elements is denied, the person is no longer complete". Maalouf uses his own life as an example, saying that when he moved from Lebanon to France, society expected him to choose between being Arab or French.

Karam reflects the silent strength of exile and the responsibilities he carries toward his family. Karam takes on the responsibility of stability, acting as a devoted son in family split apart by displacement, in contrast to some of his brothers who rebel or stray. His existence is influenced but both the necessity to preserve continuity for the following generation and the memories of a nation he never fully experienced but which he keeps with him through his parents 'stories. The narrative uses Karam to show how exile frequently takes the form of constant, occasionally burdensome responses rather than always exhibiting dramatic revolt.

The displacement and the exile caused the identity crisis each generation affected by the exile in a different way. For example: Alia and Atef are attached to Palestine by memories, and the feeling of loss. Whereas, their children: Souad and Karam are affected by

identity crisis in a sense of struggling between assimilation to the western culture, because they grow up in foreign countries, they never knew Palestine. As a result, the fragmentation of each member of the Yacoub family in different country increase the identity crisis and the homeland is related by memories more than reality as to say, each one raised up in an environment that is totally different from other environment like Karam who raised in Boston and Saoud who raised in Amman. The third generation in *Salt Houses*, represented mainly by characters Souad, Manar, Karam, and Zain, grapple with the consequences of displacement and the search for identity. Unlike their grandparents who experienced forced exile and their parents who tried to pressure cultural roots, this generation is born and raised in western or Arabic countries. They are away from home. Hence, they struggle to know their Arab roots, traditions, and identities. They face many issues through living abroad like: the problem of language loss, culture differences, belonging, every character from the third generation tries to define himself example.

The children from the fourth generation in *Salt Houses* struggle deeply with the problem of belonging. Born into exile and raised in places like Kuwait, Paris, or the United States characters like: Manar and Zain, Abdullah. Linah is Karam and Budur's daughter who represents the third generation growing up in exile, far from the Palestinian homeland. Raised in the United States, Linah is largely disconnected from the traditions of her family. The narrator argues: "Linah never felt homesick for a place she never knew. Her father spoke of Palestine like a myth, but to her it was just a word" (Alyan, 2017, p.383). She heard her parents, discussion about the conflict between Isreal and Palestine. While her father carries the trauma of displacement and the desire to belong, Linah grows up more focused on her present life than on inherited memories. Her story reflects the fading connection to identity and homeland in the face of assimilation and distance.

Abdullah, the son of Souad and part of the third generation, represents the deepening complexities of identity in host country. His disconnection from homeland Palestine creates a form of identity struggle. Unlike cousins, Manar and Zain in *Salt Houses* are members of the third generation of the Yacoub family. They are the children of Souad and they are living in exile away from Palestine, Zain was raised in France and detached from the Palestinian roots because he tends to avoid political discussions or cultural attachments, showing a kind of assimilation into Western society. The narrator argues, «Zain never thought of himself as anything but French” (Alyan,2017, p.320). Unlike, Manar highlights many of the struggles because of her Palestinian roots and raised in exile. Especially, in a western society in the United States, after they told her and finds out she had Palestinian roots, she strongly wanted to learn more about Palestine. She wants with curiosity and a longing for a place she had never seen before.

Even though she was pregnant, she still wanted to discover the roots of her Palestinian ancestors. In September 2014, Manar decides to travel to Jaffa, the first city in Palestine that her grandparents used to live before Israeli occupation, where the lively atmosphere and warm evening air evoke memories of her Palestinian roots. The narrator points a vivid picture of her experiences in the city, she settles into a restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean, she finds solace in the breathtaking view, but is frequently reminded of her tumultuous past filled with anger. The narrator argues, “She stands in front of the house, knowing it’s hers, knowing it isn’t” (Alyan, 2017, p.248). When she arrived to the place where her grandparents used to live, she discovers that Israeli occupation destroyed it. A critical analysis by Iram Rubab, Muhammad Rizwan, and Dr. Adnan Tahir examine the identity crisis in *Salt houses* in themes of home loss, displacement, memories, and nostalgia, they analyze the identity crisis for the Palestinian family during living in exile and the challenge between the life in foreign countries for each member of the Yacoub family and the nostalgia towards their homeland.

This novel ends back in Palestine, where it began. Manar is the youngest daughter of the Yacoub family. She was born in America. She only knows Palestine through storytelling and letters, but she is curious to visit it. For instance, she goes back to Palestine because she considers it “Home”, she took her American passport and fled to her great-grandparents’ homeland. Her adventure began in Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport. She is stopped by an airport security who inquired about her family history background, when she arrived to Tel Aviv, she travels onward the West Bank, and this was her plan to visit her roots. The narrator explains every weekend she packs her worn backpack, walks east to the bus station near Damascus Gate, boards one of the buses to a different city. Tel Aviv, Haifa, Hebron. And the West Bank -that concrete wall a menace, always jolting her freshy when it appears -Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus (Alyan, 2017, p.295). In this quote about the girl from the grandchildren of the Yacoub family, tries again to connect her identity to the past life of her Palestinian great grandparents. She looks for her roots that are dismissed by multigenerational migration from different countries and return to homeland Palestine. She visits Jaffa and Nablus. Even though, her grandparents rarely talk about Palestine.

The narrator assumed, “The eager voices of waiters carry along the Jaffa port, they stand out the restaurant, sweating in their suits. It is early evening, the sun nearly set, through the air is still hot and humid, thick with the saltiness that remains Manar of Beirut ...She pauses in front of restaurant. There is an ornate menu propped up and she scans the items- Kibbeh, samak harra, warak anab” (Alyan,2017,p.310) the author portrays the life in Palestine through Manar’s trip to Jaffa on 14 September 2014 as the view of the city with its Palestinian people there and cities the restaurants ,the cafeterias, the narrator writes, “She’d envisioned reading Darwish in seaside cafes, kneeling together handful of soil into her pocket”, she tries to connect with her roots, when she walks through the streets, sensing both the beauty of the seaside city, and looking for her grandparents lost homes, for her Palestine

is a mirror that reflects her inner identity and belongings. In other page, the writer Hala Alyan describes the other cities that Manar visited Jerusalem, and the religious city described as the narrator expresses in this novel, “But Al-Aqsa had been a disappointment, the Holy Sepulcher as well. Through each marketplace was perfumed with spices, each mosque framed with beautiful calligraphy, she felt uninspired. Sometimes she felt as well as the sun set over Jerusalem, the city alive with its low, intimate thrumming” (Alyan, 2017, p.311). through this religious city comparing to herself seems open-minded and not practicing Islam, not cooking traditional foods feel herself empty of not having belonging roots by their noticing that the places tied to her family’s past no longer belong to hers. By the end of the narrative, Alia suffers with Alzheimer’s disease and cannot remember anything about Palestine as her memories fade, Alia begins to forget people, places, traditions, Later, she dies in Amman and her grandchildren live in different separate countries because of displacement. Alia’s death creates a deep rupture within the Yacoub family, her death becomes a metaphor for identity crisis in *Salt houses* symbolizing the fragility of their attachment to Palestinian identity, because she embodies memory and resistance through generation. Following the death. The youngest generation lost a strong connection to the past previous land Palestine. Hence, the youngest generation grow up more detached from their heritage. Her death, therefore, does not only mark the loss of a matriarch but also symbolizes the fading of cultural memory, leaving younger generations in assimilation in their new homes and the idea of a homeland they know only through memories and storytelling.

## **2. Identity Crisis in Shahla Ujayli’s *A Sky So Close to Us***

### **a. Haniyah Thabit’s Identity Issues:**

In *A Sky So Close to Us*, Haniyah Thabit, a third generation of Palestinians, represents the delicate balancing act between cultural assimilation and the preservation of ancestral

roots. Being a Palestinian-Vietnamese American who grew up in the US, her identity is more influenced by the inherited legacies of migration and displacement than by actual war. Despite not having personally experienced the Nakba or the Vietnam War, she is still influenced by memories of these historical occurrences through her parents and generational passing. Therefore, Haniyah symbolizes how ancestry and exile continue to impact subsequent generations: not by personal hardship, but rather via the inherited feeling of cultural obligation, loss, and belonging. The narrator asserts: “also, the sweep of the narrative includes histories from Palestine before and after the 1948 Nakba ... and beyond to the United States, Serbia, and, Vietnam” (Ujayli, 2019, p.110). This quote illustrates characters ties to them to forebears and highlight how pain and identity are inherited. Its wide-ranging focus from Palestine prior to a following the 1948 Nakba to the US, Serbia, and Vietnam - emphasizes how Palestinian displacement transcends national boundaries and crosses over into other world histories.

Her emotional world and existence are shaped by the historical traumas she holds, especially in the Jordanian hospital where she is receiving cancer treatment. The narrator reports: “Joumane also sheds light on overcoming cancer in relation to another influential character. She befriends Hanoi. Haniyah, who is a patient in the same hospital because she shows signs of hope. In one of the incidents, Haniyah informs Joumane that she does not have to wear a scarf ...” (Chabane ,2022, p.56). In these two quotes, Joumane reveals that Haniyah encourages her to live her life and express herself and her body even though she is sick. Haniyah is also a source of confidence and luck for her as long as she survived. It appears that Joumane does not only consider Haniyah as hope but also as a means to overcome her cancer. Haniyah’s character transcends a simple identity crisis; instead, she embodies a complex, celebratory negotiation of her diverse cultural background of displacement between her Vietnamese, Palestinian, and American identities, she simultaneously embraces and takes

pride in her origins. Her tattoos of Kalashnikov symbolize resistance, acting as physical markers of her cultural and personal history rather than signs of conflict or confusion. Additionally, dancing in the novel is depicted as a powerful means for Haniyah to reconcile and overcome her feelings of fragmented identity, allowing her to express and celebrate herself fully.

Family recollections and the constant weight of intergenerational exile have molded Haniyah's sense of dislocation, which is strongly inherited. Her attitudes toward home, identity, and belonging. Through Haniyah, Ujayli presents exile as a subtle, enduring state, rather than being a set place, turns home into a fractured and constantly shifting emotional environment. Joumane's role as the narrator frames about her relation with Haniyah, allowing the Palestinians character's emotional experience to ground the novel's larger discussion of diaspora identity, heightens the significance of this disparity.

**b. Nasser's identity issues:**

The figure Dr.Nasser al Amreih, a third generation Palestinian Syrian in exile, is one who has accepted his displacement obvious emotional suffering or internal conflict. It said that: "While Dr.Nasser al Amreih is another happy exile intellectual". (Chabane,2022, p.48). The term "happy exilic intellectual" is used to describe the stereotype of intellectuals who are exiled but seem to adapt and flourish in spite of their situation. As a third-generation Palestinian Syrian who still struggles with intense emotional agony and inner conflict, Dr. Nasser's reality is not adequately represented by this term. Because of this, the quotation minimizes his experience and ignores the actual difficulties of exile. In contrast to many who suffer and struggle under the weight of exile, Nasser comes out a steady, prosperous, and seems to be happy in both his personal and professional life. Ujayli examines Dr.Nasser el Amerieh's experiences and points of views concerning exile.

In *A Sky So Close to Us*, Dr. Nasser takes a more detached stance when discussing themes of identity loss and belonging. He acknowledges his Palestinian heritage, but it doesn't control his feeling or influence his choices. Nasser places a higher value on emotional equilibrium and handles his difficulties with composed acceptance rather than defiance or hopelessness, in contrast to those who are profoundly impacted by hereditary pain or yearning for invisible homeland. Even though Joumane Badran, his friend, finds it difficult to empathize, this approach gives him stability even though it can cause emotional drift. Dr. Nasser himself both purposefully keeps his emotional control while actively participating in social situations. Edward Said states, "An intellectual is like a shipwrecked person who learns how to live in a certain sense with the land". (Said, 1994, p. 60). This thought is shown in the fact that he never publicly shows sadness or discontent toward exile throughout the book. Nasser's statement, "I have no city that can rise or fall", is in line with the notion. I don't see how someone can feel a sense of attachment and belonging to a city" (Chabane, 2022, p. 58). Because of his experiences being uprooted from one country and city to another, he is unable to identify with a single place. He could therefore be regarded as homeless, although he appears to accept this situation with a certain ease.

Dr. Nasser al-Almerieh reveals a different way of reasoning about exile and emotional resilience, he changes how Joumane views the urban place and what it signifies to belong. His relationships with Joumane show that accepting displacement does not mean you stop caring or feeling, instead, it creates a strong link based on admiration, awareness, and support. Nasser is more than just a friend in the narrative: he assists how Joumane understands being resilient. He demonstrates a distinct type of bravery by accepting illness, like cancer, without giving up, his attitude shows how an individual can change difficult experiences into wisdom, this helps Joumane deal with her own struggles with peace and optimism.

In this scene of *A Sky So Close to Us*, Nasser's confession to Joumane Badran that he has no country to belong to, yet has learned to live within the land where he now stands, reveals the deepest emotional current of the novel about the reality of exile. His words express the condition of someone whose homeland exists only as a memory and loss, not as a place where he can safely return or truly belong. By telling Joumane this, Nasser exposes the quiet resilience required to continue living in a land that offers stability but not identity. Therefore, trying to build a life in a new place can never replace the homeland that once sheltered him. A place that lives in memory through it no longer welcomes even as their hearts drift toward a distant country. Through their gentle conversation, Shahla Ujayli highlights the life of Nasser by struggling to live between two worlds learning to move forward in unfamiliar spaces while holding onto a homeland that feels close, yet is no longer within reach.

### **c. Yacoub's Identity Issues**

In *A Sky So Close to Us*, Yacoub Sharif is a third-generation Palestinian character, who lives in Jordan and works as a doctor in Amman, he gives off the impression of success and stability, but underneath it all is the heavy burden of the Palestinian exile that has been carried down throughout the centuries. In this context it asserted: "Ujayli does not only represent Dr. Nasser but also Dr. Yacoub. The patter grows up in Jordan and dreams to be a different person. Since his childhood, he realizes that he is an intelligent person; Consequently, he decides to be "a cultured overachiever" (Chabane,2022, p.58). This passage demonstrates that Dr. Yacoub's concept of self is impacted by exile. Being up in Jordan, he recognizes his brilliance early on and chooses to become a cultural overachiever. His tenacity reflects how he overcomes has through achievement and education.

However, Dr. Yacoub's connection to Haniyah Thabit is shaped by what Joumane later understands as his "Palestinian identity", a link that becomes even more significant when read

through the lens of an “identity crisis”. Dr. Yacoub’s attachment to Haniyah is not presented as simple admiration; rather, it reflects his effort to navigate the tension between his professional life abroad and his “unresolved sense of belonging” to Palestine. This internal struggle makes Haniyah a symbolic reminder of the cultural and historical roots he feels slipping away. Joumane interprets his behavior as a response to this crisis, Joumane plays an important role in revealing this dynamic. She interprets Dr. Yacoub’s behavior and explains that his interests in Haniyah is connected to their shared Palestinian identity. Joumane’s insight helps the reader see that this friendship is rooted in belonging, memory, and cultural connection. Through her interpretation, the novel shows how identity can work quietly in the background shaping emotions, creating bonds, and even directing sympathy or loyalty. Overall, collective identity shaped by exile. Through this dynamic, the novel highlights how identity, especially when marked by displacement can become a “conflicted space”. And shows that identity is not as a simple label but as a powerful force that influences relationships, perceptions, and the ways characters see one another.

In addition, Dr. Yacoub’s interactions with Joumane and Haniyah demonstrates his intense emotional sincerity and desire for a global connection. He finds a common emotional connection created by disease, exile, and personal grief. Joumane believes that Dr. Sherif was using Haniyah as a way to connect to his longing for his own roots, the history of the father, helped him search for heroism he had been deprived of. Thus, because of his family’s displacement, Dr. Yacoub seems uncomfortable and unhappy. In this case, it claimed “It also focuses on Dr. Yacoub Sherif who is an unfordable exile figure. It also reported: “Because of displacement, Dr. Yacoub does not feel happy in Jordan even though he is an intellectual” (Chabane, 2022, p.56). These quotes illustrate how deeply affects Dr. Yacoub Sherif’s identity and sense of belonging. The first portrays him as an “uncomfortable exile figure” highlights his feeling of alienation and discomfort, while the second reveal that even with his

success, he still cannot truly feel at home in Jordan. Therefore, wants a relationship with Haniyah because of her family's history and heroism. Haniyah is only a means to overcome his sense of filiation because he is unable to do it without it.

hereditary ties to their hometown. They experience a separated sense of identification and belonging as a result of this duality, which keeps them away from feeling completely rooted in any location. In addition to this, Paul Tiambe Zeleza illustrates that exile has been "Unwelcome" to many people (Zeleza, 2005, p .9). Because of this applies to Sharif's identity struggle sin the narrator traces his origins and his history to displacement. As a result, Yacoub perceives himself as existence in a state of transition, never fully at ease with his past or present.

In *A Sky So Close to Us*, Dr. Yacoub Sharif faces a deep inner conflict that mirrors physical banishment, though it is less openly dramatic. His identity is trapped in a delicate harmony between remembrance and reality, torn between the perfect legacy of his predecessors and a present that has made that past detached and inaccessible. While he devotes to treating others as a doctor, Ujayli underlines that Yacoub cares for his patients without considering their past or origins. His knowledge based comes not from scholarly knowledge alone, but from his profound humanitarian empathy. Ultimately, his actual struggle is to heal the feelings of pain connected to his broken identity.

To conclude, younger Palestinian generation is shown by both Alyan and Ujayli to inherit displacement as continues identity battle rather than only a memory. Children and grandchildren of exiles in *Salt Houses* struggle with a shattered sense of cultural identity as they are torn between their ancestry and present circumstances. In a similar vein, *A Sky So Close to Us* examines the exile of the younger characters as they grapple with issues of genuine belonging and carry the unsaid grief that has been passed down from their elders or

their grandparents. Collectively, these books show the struggle to preserve the memories of a lost homeland while adjusting to new, frequently unpredictable, conditions for survival shapes the identities of future generations.

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion Palestinian Displacement and Identity Crisis In Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* and Shahla Ujayli's *A Sky So Close to Us*' theme, has studied the permanent and significant impacts of colonization, exile, and identity crisis as they are portrayed in these two narratives. Based on the historical and political facts of Palestinian relocation, the study links the Israeli occupation and the 1948 Nakba, which forced the exit of many Palestinian, to the beginning of this current problem. This painful separation resulted in a continuous Arab diaspora, in which they continue to live as refugees, displaced people, or exiles, with effects that last for generations.

Using Edward Said's *Out of Place* as a guide, this study looked at the existential and psychological effects of exile. In illustrating how exile is internalized and affects identity and perception. Alongside Said, Amin Maalouf's *The Name of Identity: Violence and the need to belong* was also discussed in the dissertation. It provided perceptive view on the diversity and complexity of current identity, particularly as it relates to migration and belonging. Because of their concentrated the exploration of cultural displacement, hybrid identities, and the politics of self-identity, these theorists were chosen, and their theories are essential for examining Palestinian storytelling that is based on continuous exile.

The historical background was set by portraying the Nakba as a process that is still affecting Palestinian lives rather than just a historical disaster. A critical examination of intellectual works on migrant identity, and Palestinian exile was part of it, highlighting important discussions and showing research gaps. Given this context, the study examined how modern literary works depict the generational effects of displacement and use story to rebuild identity, prevent cultural destruction, and maintain collective memory.

In one hand, the Yacoub family is followed through several generations and periods in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses*, which is portrayed as a multigenerational family narrative that illustrates displacement waves or movements of Palestinian displacement. *A Sky So Close to Us* by Shahla Ujayli, on the other hand, offers a more direct perspective, focusing on the experience of modern displacement in the midst of war. Both books are set against the backdrop of the writers' own histories, diasporic identities, and the historical occurrences that influenced their stories. Through narratives that are both disparate and deeply connected, the multigenerational experience of Palestinian displacement is shown. As the violent colonial rebellion known as the Nakba, which forced them to flee their homeland, the first generation, the grandparents went through the pain of exile.

This dispossession deeply changed their lives, and they carried the mass of the fragment in their daily life. Instead of carrying the direct memory of exile, the third generation, the grandchildren who are frequently born or raised in exile struggle with their fragmented identity that it is forced to deal with the difficulties of living in cultural hybridity, linguistic alienation, and fractured identity. They live in the result of relocation, lack of direct experience of their family land, and captured between the need to fit in with their current location and strong desire to maintain a connection to a place they have never visited. This generational divide is depicted with deep political perception and emotional distinction, showing that displacement is more than just physical migration; it becomes a repeated internal conflict shaped by memory, and the endless desire for belonging.

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