



**The Search for Identity and the Mutual
Relationship between Man and Land in
Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura*.**

By

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المستخلص:

البحث عن الهوية والعلاقة المشتركة
بين الإنسان والأرض في رواية رضوى عاشور: الطنطورية.

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى محاولة تحليل واستكشاف رواية رضوى عاشور "الطنطورية"، وهي رواية تعرض القضية الفلسطينية التي تواجه العدوان الصهيوني، ومحاولة طمس الهوية التي يتم ممارستها ضد الفلسطينيين. في رواية الطنطورية، تحاول رضوى عاشور الكشف عن الحقائق من خلال توظيف السرد التراثي. وتحاول من خلال الرواية أيضاً الانتصار لأصحاب الأرض ومحاولة استرجاع الأرض والهوية والتاريخ. كما يتم الكشف عن الإنسان الذي يدافع عن وجوده، على الرغم من نزوحه، وفقدانه الهوية. لقد اكتسبت رواية الطنطورية شعبية كبيرة في العالم العربي، بعد أن لمست مشاعر الشعوب العربية والإسلامية، ولعبت على الوتر الحساس للقضية الفلسطينية. ويحمل عنوان الرواية لامرأة تدعى "رقية" من قرية "طنطورة" التي تقع على الساحل الفلسطيني جنوب حيفا. ويرتبط هذا الاسم بالإنسان النشط الفعال الذي يمنح الحياة لغيره من الأجيال الأخرى. فهي مثل الشجرة التي تتكاثر وتربي الأجيال، تغرس فيهم التعلق بالأرض وحبها منذ الصغر. هذه الفضائل جعلت رضوى عاشور تركز على المرأة والأرض؛ الأرض تنبعث منها النباتات التي تبقىها على قيد الحياة، وفقدان الهوية هو تماماً مثل فقدان الأرض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: رضوى عاشور، الطنطورية، الإنسان والأرض، الهوية العربية.

Abstract:

This paper aims to explore Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura*, a novel that introduces the Palestinian case facing Zionist injustice, and the obliteration of identity practiced upon Palestinians. In *The Woman from Tantoura*, Radwa Ashour tries to reveal the historical facts by employing heritage narration, and the novel tries to advocate the land, identity, and history. It also reveals the unfearful man who defends his existence, despite his displacement, and loss of identity. *The Woman from Tantoura* is a novel that gained great popularity in the Arab world after touching the emotions of the Arab-Islamic peoples and playing on the sensitive emotions of the Palestinian issue. The title of the novel is carried by a woman called "Rukia" Al-Tantouria" from the village of "Tantoura" located on the Palestinian coast south of Haifa. This name is associated with women as life-giving human beings and a very active element in her society. She is like the tree that breeds generations, instilling in their attachment to the land and love of the country from a young age. These virtues made Radwa Ashour focus on women and the land; the land emits the plant that keeps it alive, and the loss of land is just like the loss of honor.

Keywords: Radwa Ashour, Man, and land, Ecocriticism, Tantoura, Palestine.

Introduction:

Radwa Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura* (2014) is her last novel, in which she documents the story of the Palestinian conflict through the eyes of Rukia. Ashour sought to be a Palestinian defender of the Palestinian identity more than defining the Palestinian cause; the defense of the rights of Palestinians in their land and the history of their ancestors. The novel depicts man and proceeds from the land to reveal the journey of the Palestinian man between the Arab and other peoples. The character of Rukia is the character of all Palestinians, and her suffering exemplifies the suffering of an entire people who found themselves outside the borders of history, identity, and land; which they were deprived of.

Rukia, a family member, is a very special heroine, who carries all the qualities of survival, and instills her roots in the land of Palestine. She remained through the novel as a survivor, resisting difficult experiences and suffering. She was a heroine in the sense of the word; a Palestinian, an Arab, and a human being who believes in the rights of the people of Palestine. She has taken the initiative in all the roles assigned by the writer and succeeded in being the controversial heroine throughout the events of the novel. She gave every man a lesson in the meaning of the spirit of determination and struggle; even if this led her to sacrifice herself for the sake of her country. In doing so, she depicts the meaning of sacrifice, steadfastness, and snobbery for the sake of her homeland.

The events of *The Woman from Tantoura* took place in many Arab countries, despite the borders drawn by the invaders; including Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. All Arab countries were

subjected to imperialist colonialism. The novel reveals the suffering of a Palestinian family, after the Palestinian Nakba and the beginning of the Zionist conquest that dominated the entire Arab territories, from 1948 to the present day. The family escaped to many Arab cities: Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt until it tasted the pain of loss and the dark colors of fear and hunger, enduring the cold, and the pain of suffering in the camps. No land embraced it, despite the bonds of brotherhood that Arab peoples believe in. The land is the natural resort for man and the honor of his dignity, whatever the conditions of living.

Not only did the writer employ the resilience of the heroism of the main characters; but also, she emphasizes her role as a mother and a wife. Despite the circumstances, she was able to marry and give birth to children; so that generations remain firmly on this land as mountains. She married her cousin (Amin), a doctor working in a hospital in Acre, and she gave birth to three sons (Saddiq, Hassan, Abdul Rahman) and a daughter called Mariam adopted by her husband after his heart got tendered for her. After her entire family died in the Zionist evacuation of Palestinian villages and towns, she became a supporter of other children and young people. Mariam grew up and formed a friendship with a child of her age called "Wissal", and she met her coincidentally in the shelter. Her family resorted to it during the evacuation and displacement experienced by the Palestinian people, and she was the closest person to her heart as she saw in her the image of the other ego, because of the suffering they both shares. Wissal, Rukia's childhood friend and another Nakba witness explains:

As soon as we entered the house, I asked Maryam to make our coffee, Wissal said, “Put off the coffee, let’s put these things away first.” She rolled up her sleeves and took one of the suitcases he had brought to the kitchen and squatted down beside it and started to take out the food she had brought. She handed me three plastic bottles, tightly sealed, containing olive oil, and three others in which she had put olives]... [oil and olive from our trees, I would take that to Ruqayya even if she was living in an oil press!” (Ashour 2014, P. 326)

In fact, ecocriticism is employed in this paper, as it constitutes the representations of nature in scholarly works and confirms the relationship between writing and the environment. The events of *The Woman from Tantoura* occur during the declaration of the establishment of the Zionist entity, from 1948 until the *intifada* in 2000. It is a historical document that witnessed the incidents of what the Palestinian people have gone through since the setback, witnessed Palestine massacres and displacement, murder, intimidation, kidnapping, and rape. The world, human rights organizations, and the Arab League turned a blind eye to those crimes, even whitewashing Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people and accepting it as a member of the United Nations. Ghassan Kanafani in his work *The Land of the Sad Oranges* (1962) explains:

I saw the long line of the big cars enter Lebanon leaving far away the land of orange ... I started weeping in a loud sharp way ... your mother was still locking in silence to the oranges ... In your father's eye the reflection of all the orange trees he had left behind All the clean orange trees he had planted one by one glittered in his face. He failed to stop the tears that fill up his

eyes, when facing the police head officer. When we reached Saida, in the afternoon, we became refugees. (Kanafani, 2000, P. 200)

In addition, the intellectual-artistic vision of Radwa Ashour in her novel, *The Woman from Tantoura* holds a prestigious place. Its intellectual focus is her obsession with nationalism and the victimization of Palestinians. This is based on the narrative of the memory of asylum supported by images of refugees in their occupied and devastated countries and the images of their suffering in exile. This is revealed by dismantling the relationship between the intellectual structure of the writer and the textual structure of the narrative to introduce the creative experience of Palestinians and its relevance to the writer's desire to monitor and document the continuing tragedy of Palestinian refugees.

Radwa Ashour reveals the way of searching for identity and memory, introducing us to man's alienation and looking forward to the story of our Palestinianism and the consequences of alienation. She tries to show her ability to touch that deepest part of her readers by presenting the inevitable story, where we ask ourselves if we know Palestine, and does the cognitive structure of Palestine still exist in us? *The Woman from Tantoura* tells us the stories of the Palestinian diaspora, forced displacement, and the facts of killing and massacres. Rukia, the protagonist, tells us the story from the beginning of what we are now experiencing from the consequences of displacement, the daily story; explaining the origin of Palestine as a document that simplifies the history of Palestine and the history of the Nakba. This novel is considered a fundamental reference for those who want to know the history of Palestine as it reflects the suffering of its

people in their land from the events of the Nakba 48 till the setback of 67. Rukia tries to figure out the sweetness of her home by saying:

“Me, me, me” I would go down into the deep pit and they would spread sand over me until my body disappeared, leaving only the head rising excitedly from its warm, sandy burial place. A grave surrounded by the laughter and devilment of the young. At other times I would shout at the top of my lungs like someone struck by madness, “Hun-ter! Hun-ter!” I would crawl on the ground and jump and crawl again, in my hand the copper vessel that I had secured between the rocks as a trap for fish, in which the poor thing had been caught. I would lift the silverfish by its tail and say teasingly, “My fish is always the biggest and the best.” (Ashour 2014b, P. 3)

Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura* investigates the narrative between the present and the past, transferring us, as readers, from the Nakba stage to the post-Nakba to the beginning of the new millennium. This novel is characterized by aesthetic writing with an emotional sense, and documentation of oral history through stories, a technique that makes the reader live these stories with their meaning of resistance and the struggle to survive despite displacement and massacres. It enables the reader to live the most horrible images of massacres covered by the novel, including documented facts "The Massacre of Tantoura, the Massacre of Sabra and Shatila, The Children's School shelter in Sidon". Also, it explains the meaning of losing the homeland:

I write, partly because, in the process of
decomposing and recomposing which writ-

ing involves, something might appear, make sense, become a little less unintelligible. And, also, because the free play of the imagination and the exercise of the power to create, to draw characters, to construct space and temporality, to effect shifts, transitions, and changing time speeds, to manipulate words and sentences, is a re-appropriation of threatened geography and a threatening history. But more important, writing is a retrieval of a human will be negated. (Ashour, 2000, p. 88)

Rukia reminds us that Palestinians are home seekers across the country, and sometimes they are called the children of Palestinian refugee camps even if they do not live there. Those camps where many coercive laws have been imposed, not by laws but by the sanctions they have been obliged to. They have been deprived of their most basic rights as human beings because they are refugees. These camps are part of the bottom of every city, part of the marginalized, resettlement society, they are exiles. Astrid Erll in her article “Traveling Memory” (2011), identified the importance of collective memories:

The individual who shares the collective images and narrative of the past, who practice mnemonic rituals, display inherited habits and can draw on repertoires of explicit and implicit knowledge All forms of Diaspora lead to diffusion of mnemonic media, contents, forms, and practice across the globe. (Erll, 2011, p.10).

It drains the heart and emotions when reading the description of the scenes of massacres and murders and the bodies accumulated on each other. Rukia's patience is matchless when she saw the dead bodies of her father and brother. She was like a flower, pushing us to meditate on her resistance and patience when losing her family. Here, the resistance is not in the sense of defending the homeland, but it is greater than this issue. The resistance no longer faces occupation, confrontation, and steadfastness, but pain inside a body full of loss, absence, and possessed by fear. In return to resist the pain of the loss of our precious memories, the reader got to become more like an exhausted soul. Apart from the exorbitant prices, Palestinians paid from a young age, its consequences formulate the awareness and collective unconscious, reflection, and reference of the individuals. Through the incidents of the novel, Rukia was recalling what once happened to her neighbors when they travel from one place to another as a perfect goal for Zionists during their journey:

And how can I take the train when most of the passengers are English soldiers or Jewish settlers? Even if they left me alone and no one bothered me, how would I dare ask any of them a question? They might not understand me when I ask, they might make fun of me, and they might intentionally mislead me so that I get off at the wrong station and get lost between towns. I might find myself in one of the companies they call 'settlements,' what would I do then? Knock on the Jews' door and tell

them to bring me back home? Why did Abu Sadiq choose the hard way and say, 'Accept my choice'? (Ashour 2014, P.10)

The camp epics are no longer lessons and meanings of resistance, but they are like the loss of human nature. We do not get used to the losses unless something dies in us. What is the impact of what Rukia saw in the scenes of massacres and killings, as well as other Palestinians — what is the psychological impact of war? What is the impact of absence, loss, and massacre, not only on the Palestinians but on all those who coexisted under the conditions of war? The meaning of the struggle to preserve the human nature within us (humanity that destroys criminal acts around us) When highlights the question of the world of systematic and indiscriminate repression of this age, a world that is not suitable for a man or the growth of his humanity, we need to think like Rukia and preserve the younger generations.

Rukia describes the Palestinian conflict in a character named Hanzala, he is the symbol of a strong and tortured Palestinian, with his strong body/ humorous spirit. Despite the circumstances facing him, he stands in the face of the occupying enemy and the forged masks. Najji al-Ali is also presented with his drawings that introduce us to ourselves because when we know that we can accomplish our dreams. The social system in which the individual lives constitute and control many behavioral practices, extending to the methods of death/life, derived from the general social system. The system has been developed by monetary, social, and colonial studies to the so-called Necropolitics; The study of the prevailing patterns of death and life, bodies and their movement in (spaces) of society becomes an indication of the

understanding of society itself. The power of the society's members constitutes the major role in resistance, and thus their resistance through "necropolitics", the system of life and death within the structure of the colonial system. The location of the body (Palestinian and Zionist) is like a policy aimed at removing the body from the Palestinian place even by death.

Ghassan Kanafani is also an icon representing all Palestinian refugees, as Rukia mentioned in the story of the land of the sad oranges "When we arrived in Sidon in the era, we became refugees", also echoed in our minds from time to time as a passage of a song or a poem. The real identity has been distorted over the generations, gradually forgetting the issue, as a result of false laws and cheap ink stained on paper, political deception, and open Zionist maneuvers. Citizens need to be secured and settled in a society that guarantees their rights and needs. When feeling secure, humans can achieve miracles to gain their freedom and legal rights. The rights of Palestinians to return to their homeland, which is neglected by Palestinian refugees due to their identity and nationality, constitute a detailed part of Palestinian history, memory, and identity. The Palestinian identity has been subjected to physical, and social killings (based on the exile of the other). Identity (the association of a person's entity with land, i.e., an integral part of it), leads to the loss of the rights of an oppressed citizen, suffering from the racism of identity for which refugees have no guilt, and the absence of equality and social justice, which is damaged. It threatens the stability of the future of the Palestinian refugee because human beings and identity can only be achieved through his association with his homeland, his hometown then becomes the source of his dignity.

Rukia experienced the conditions of occupation and the events of massacres; she knows Palestine well with all its glorious moments. She experienced the consequences of displacement with its minor details. Palestinians are linked to the guilt of asylum, identifying them with the consequences of displacement and paying exorbitant prices. The question here is, will Palestinianism remain the same? With the influence of the obliteration of identity and asylum spreading over the countries? The Palestinian identity is subjected to a modern attack by the Zionist entity and others. So, the policies of absence, obliteration, and fragmentation are linked to the cognitive structure, such as linguistic, cultural, and societal elements. Ashour's *The Woman from Tantoura* in one of her readings looks like a narrative of Palestinian geography, which the Zionist entity tried to erase, and remove its features from the face of the map, to impose its illusory map and build it on its ruins. The novel begins with the establishment of its initial relationship with the sea, the sea of the village to reveal that the geography of the novel has an eternal dimension presented in the face of the alleged millennial history of the Zionist story. Edward Said provides an expressive meaning and the consequences of the Nakba as a form of trauma:

Many families and individuals had their lives broken, their spirits drained, their composure destroyed forever in the context of seemingly unending, serial dislocation: this was and still is for me of the greatest poignancy. One of my uncles went from Palestine to Alexandria to Cairo to Baghdad to Beirut and now in his 80s lives, a sad, silent man, in Seattle. Neither he nor his immediate family ever fully recovered. This is emblematic of the larger story of loss and dispossession, which continues today. (Said 2007, p. 248)

Ashour did not forget to link the first appearance of Jews to aggressive violence, as they appear as outsiders trying to rape the land. As a matter of fact, the novel establishes the geography of Palestine recovered from memory. Its erased geography is presented in the face of this aggressive, false, illegal settlement, although it still exists on the ground. Not surprisingly, many residents of the new settlements, from the prospects brought by racist Zionist ideology, feel that the ghosts of their killers are building their new cities. More than one study confirms that many residents suffer from ghost hunts by their old inhabitants. They are not just imagined ghosts as the novel reveals how many Palestinians who obtained their land, including Uncle Abu Al-Amin, sneak back into it at regular intervals, and looks like ghosts are chasing them. Or rather, remove their settlements from the map, and instead plant the wiped land. Repetition is used by Ashour to indicate the difficulty of the Palestinian exile and the inherited legacy of defiance:

In bed, between sleep and waking, I became confused. I thought, was Naji sitting beside me, or was it a vision in the dream? Would I find him the next morning in Ain Al-Helweh?... Would Naji meet little Ruqayya one day across the wise, or without it? I will sleep so that I can get up early in the morning and go to the camp, to look for Naji and make sure he is there.”
(Ashour 2014b, p. 362)

Through its exquisite narrative, the novel displaces several settlements and restores the beauty of ancient Palestine. It re-

establishes its features and monuments to the real maps of Palestine. The novel recreates its geography from memory, where all the villages of the Sahel and the towns of Galilee, with orange walls, olive trees, and figs, with all its wildflowers and crops, are described. From Tantoura to Ain Ghazal, Izm, Qaisaria, Freddys and Tarbeja, Ain Tahrabiya, Ain Basin, Safouria and Al-Mutla, Um al-Shuf and Tira, Wadi Ara, Al-Khalisa and dozens more are well-described. The novelist does not forget to create the geography of Palestine. Geographically, the grim reality in which the beautiful past prevailed, and uprooted its inhabitants from their homes and villages that they never abandoned. Its keys remained hanging in their necks and crammed into those camps full of humiliation. Also, they still remember the dictates of the Second Lebanese Office: from Ain el-Hilweh to the water of water, from Waffle and Burj al-North to Nahr al-Bared, from Sabra and Shatila to Burj Al-Barajneh, and other refugee camps scattered throughout the Arab map. Besides geography, the novel presents Palestinian history, the pains of the diaspora, and steadfastness. It also reflects how the Zionists took over the villages and violated all customs and sanctities with massacres and brutal ethnic cleansing, from Deir Yassin and the many villages of the Sahel to Kafr Qassem, Sabra, and Shatila.

Another massacre, *the Tantoura* massacre, exists on the map of Arab awareness of the brutal Zionist massacres, as many of the heinous massacres other than Deir Yassin and Kafr Qassem were revealed by new historians. Historically, Palestinians have missed their weapons to defend their role, and many have volunteered to help them. Other fighters come from every dawn to support them: not only from the Arab countries but also from India and Sindh, from Yugoslavia, Anatolia, and Turkistan

to defend Palestine in the face of the fierce Zionist colonial attacks. The misery of the Arab armies and their defeat in front of armed Zionist gangs from that distant date to the present day are written from the central colonial metropolitan, whether it be Britain after World War II in the 1940s, or the United States of America now. Basem Ra'ad writes:

An Israeli book on embroidery, *Arabesque: Decorative Needlework from the Holy Land*, starts with "biblical times" and ends with photographs showing Israeli adults and children wearing the embroidered clothing of Palestinian villagers (many from the villages from which Palestinians were forced to flee in 1948). These Israelis have put on an act for the photographs. The book not only takes over a Palestinian art form; it impersonates it. The euphemistic allusion to the "Holy Land" helps to camouflage the real, Palestinian source of this unique form of village art. (Ra'ad, 2010, p.128)

In this respect, Arabs may be partially responsible for the loss of Palestine. For a long time, Palestinians have been concerned with the illusion that the Arab armies will return to their country, revealing the illusion of a mirage of Balqa. Then the incidents of the novel go on to discover the next generation's awareness and their need to document the Palestinian memory to take control of its writing. At the same time, it is the story of chasing the Zionist entity for the Palestinians in Beirut and throwing them into the sea, literally not metaphorically, though they are the ones who filled the world with lies that the Arabs want to throw into the sea. With this tragic history, the reader discovers the geographical transformations of the Palestinian Diaspora from Sidon to Amman and Beirut, from Cyprus to Abu

Dhabi and Canada. If the generation of Rukia was born in Palestine, the generation of her children was born in Lebanon, while the grandchildren were born in Abu Dhabi and others in Canada. The granddaughter Rukia, where the novel closes, was born in Lod in the heart of Palestine as her grandmother. In a symbolic act, hope is restored, and it confirms the inevitability of Palestinians returning to their land. In this respect, it is the story of this rich mosaic, in which the fate of the Palestinian diaspora and the Palestinian families clashed on one hand; and the fate of the Palestinians with the fate of the rest of the Arabs on the other hand.

With the richness of the narrative, the overlap of languages, and the multiplicity of levels, Ashour writes a novel to re-save Palestine from being erased and forgotten and to put it in the center of Arab consciousness. She dedicates her novel "To Murid Barghouti" to her Palestinian husband, the Palestinian experience has a unique existence in Radwa's books and her narrator in general. It seems that being with her Palestinian husband made her more attached to the Palestinian issue, represented by the Palestinian experience of displacement. In many interviews, Ashour confirmed the permanent presence of Palestine in her work due to her husband; so, she lived the experience. Although Murid is far from the experience of being a Palestinian in the West Bank, Murid does not exist in any way in the text. The poet is not mentioned in the text, perhaps his exiled spirit exists in the case of alienation that controls the characters of the text as it controls him. Radwa wanted to return to him a part of the knowledge or "to transfer the space of her familiarity out of experience", many of the mentioned phrases and proverbs were satisfied to feel deeply acquainted with Palestinians.

The narrative is characterized by fragmentation, the writer's implicit sophistication leaves to her memory the crumbling and transition between the past, the present and the future, without any restrictions. The second chapter of the novel entitled "*The Year of the Night*" is a clear example. This chapter opens with Rukia's return to her mother and what she said about her marriage to the son of Ain al-Ghazal, who will live in Haifa. The novel reflects the time passing from the past to the present to the future smoothly. Bringing the past in the presence and retrieval of the past, connecting the present to what is happening now, and the future with time anticipations is skillfully presented through the incidents of the novel. A technique that helped Radwa to cover a very wide space of time. The novel is based on multiple time techniques, mainly preparing anticipation and retrieval, bringing the panoramic scenes that appear in the first chapters of the novel. The inclusion and deletion are abundant, also corresponding to the time pauses, especially in front of the sea are widespread. The sea is frequently mentioned, and the oscillations of time are brought with it. The text also brings frequently the narrative's transition from the basic novel to several Palestinian testimonies, letters and songs, which means that time almost stops to hear the other.

The place has influenced the nature of the identity of the novelist and the narrative figures. Human life constitutes the summary of the circumstances, environment, customs, and traditions associated with places, reflecting the places where the writer holds her identity or defends the identity of these places. Radwa chooses her tacit, originally toning dome from which to begin, the presence of the Tantoura manifests itself in the text

through the sea. the sea is mentioned several times throughout the chapters of the novel as it becomes the idol of freedom and a synonym for it. *The Woman from Tantoura* describes the place along with the well of fresh water, roses, almond trees, train, evaporation, people's habits, and weddings at the beach. The existence of the sea in the text is repeated more than once, while other details did not appear more than once in the text.

Since Rukia is part of the Palestinian identity, Ashour mentions many places she went to before arriving at Sidon. Radwa does not mention many details concerning that part, but only places such as Alfredis, Tulkarem, Hebron, Irbid, and these places are all attached to a state of sadness and death. All the places she and her mother visited, where several infants and elderly people died, exist in places such as Hebron and Irbid. Sidon and Beirut, where Rukia stays, witnessed the war and the burying of their loved ones in Sidon. Returning to Beirut with its minor details in describing places and streets, with the main and basic features of the city, such as Hamra Street/ Camp / Sea, and its smell plays a vital role in determining the attachment between Rukia and places. She considers it as a part of the smell of the sea of Tantoura. Rukia's attachment to the sea is evident in her residence in Abu Dhabi. When she is allowed to be near the sea, she goes and returns to it by car, without emotion, unlike the sea in Beirut, Sidon, and Alexandria, which was close and familiar, walking to it, wetting her feet and standing in front of it is like the smell of freedom she aspires to. Kathleen Fincham in "*Shifting Youth Identities and Notions of Citizenship in the Palestinian Diaspora*": The Case of Lebanon" speaks of a form of such authenticity-based discrimination:

As young Palestinians are increasingly being raised in Lebanese cities] ... [, the authenticity of these youths' Palestinians is being put into question by the Palestinians who remain in the camps. For example, on meeting a fellow Palestinian young woman who had grown up in the Lebanese city of Tyre, one youth from Rashidieh camp said: 'Is she Palestinian? She is not like us' (Fincham 2012, p.174)

Although Rukia is ideologically linked to the places, she prefers being in other places, and she hates being in one place. But, the lack of an accurate description of the place reflects the state of alienation described by Rukia at the beginning of the novel, where she stands at a station waiting for a train that does not come. Life goes forward and Rukia stands outside the place, out of life at the station. The place is also, an expression of a certain social reality experienced by Palestinians as they have also made some references to historical reality and the suffering of Palestinians in some places, such as camps, Sabra and Shatila, Abu Dhabi, and Acre Hospital. Despite the multiplicity of places, Radwa also reflects an ideological dimension in its choice, biased towards the narrative of the Palestinian people, their suffering, and their diaspora across all countries of the world. Rukia does not lack any nostalgia for their homeland. We find Rukia's self-talk and delivering the narrative from the conscience of the ego justifies the satisfaction of this method, as by doing so, she talks about herself, looking to the girl who used to be her, and recalls what has passed away in her character. Rukia suffers from a very

severe alienation, recounting many of the tragedies she has experienced, as an external narrator, sometimes expressing a state of sadness, and asking difficult questions but not suffering from a state of conflict with herself. The only time that Rukia's internal struggle is erupting in Abu Dhabi, happened when she resorts to wool, to get rid of the alienation and cold emotions she finds in Abu Dhabi, compensated by wool the warmth of missing human relations.

She is absent from the sophistication of action and does not regain these distances until she becomes alone and free from her obligations towards the house and the children. Rukia carries her granddaughter in her hands through barbed wire, painted by a child named Naji, and only then she has realized that she is free from the state of suspension to the state of action, and decides "I will sleep to wake up early and go to the camp, to look for a survivor. These indications show that she needs tenderness, to be a supporter for everyone around her and a place of reassurance for all her family members. Rukia represents the resilience of the Palestinians in the diaspora. It is impossible to preserve the Palestinian identity despite several attempts to dissolve it.

The Palestinian conflict refers to 1948 when the British Mandate ended and Israel was declared a state. In the meantime, thousands of Palestinians were slaughtered and constrained by the Zionist activists to leave their houses and the land. As a result, The Palestinian era of 1948 was known as the era of catastrophe since the Israeli seek to uproot indigenous people and take over the country. Palestinian catastrophe is continuously examined in terms of the postcolonial setting. Palestinian individuals are not just like the other colonized countries since

they are still under the impact of Israeli occupation. The state of Israel's capacities inside the worldview and mentality of colonialism, which up till presently perform the political, social, and financial sectors. The Palestinian conflict alludes to a particular time and particular occurrence, but the consequence of the catastrophe still affects the Palestinian's lives. Ghassan Kanafani in his work *The Land of the Sad Oranges* (1962) discusses:

I saw the long line of the big cars enter Lebanon leaving far away the land of orange ... I started weeping in a loud sharp way ... your mother was still locking in silence to the oranges ... In your father's eye the reflection of all the orange trees he had left behind All the clean orange trees he had planted one by one glittered in his face. He failed to stop the tears that fill up his eyes, when facing the police head officer. When we reached Saida, in the afternoon, we became refugees. (Kanafani, 2000, P200)

Kanafani shows that the catastrophe gets to be the official start of Palestinian history and a different identity. The collective memory is the center of the national personality that plays a crucial part in forming people's self-perception, that have endured an authentic injury. Moreover, Ernest Renan in his book, *What is a Nation?* (1882), clarifies that sharing suffering can work as a consolation. For him, "the period of enduring is worth more than the times of the eminence and triumph since it requires obligations and requests common endeavors. Joining the thought

of enduring as a binding together drive and the Palestinian catastrophe as a personality sign in the collective memory to induce joined together and to move forward.” (Renan, 1995, P11)

Long-term enduring drives the Palestinian to discover a source of consolation by joining and looking for a sense of bond together to change their personality. Personality features have to be looked for not as they were at the person level, but within the collective one to form the reaction to the disastrous occasion of a binding together. The memory of the conflict gives critical thought to reaching the relationship between the trauma and the memory on personal and collective levels. This is what Ashour exactly chooses in her novel *The Woman from Tantoura*. She presents the act of injury as a cruel of self-formation. When its impact on character features amid the traumatic occurrence and the plausibility of coexisting at the same time with the traumatic encounters and aftermaths. According to Astrid Erll in her article 'Traveling Memory'(2011) “The individual who shares the collective images and narrative of the past, who practice mnemonic rituals, display an inherited habit and can draw on repertoires of explicit and implicit knowledge All forms of Diaspora lead to diffusion of mnemonic media, contents, forms, and practice across the globe.” (Erll, 2011, p.10).

Rukia continuously looks upon herself as a casualty of her recollections, she needs to elude from it. Through her character, Ashour presents the significance of memory as implicated in her survival and versatility. Recollections in this novel play a vital role in forming the base and the will of overlooking the disastrous occasions. Ashour presents what deserves to be kept in mind as a cruel of keeping up the personality and holding the

dream to return. Rukia's child, Hassan, asked her to type her recollections of the catastrophe and its impacts on her life and others. Rukia finds his wish as an unjustifiable commitment since she does not need to remember the honorific occasion once more, as she went through a long time to disregard and put it aside to the blurred absence. These contradicting powers display Rukia's complicated nature in a continuing colonial setting. Does she consider herself as an interior or exterior? Rukia explains:

We laugh, we laugh between the jokes, the silly stories, and the recalled foolishness. We fill the gaps of months of absence with the stories of what happened to them, or me, or to others of our family and friends who live in Ain al-Helwa or in Jenin or in Tunis or who stayed in the area of al-Furaydis, or who are scattered among the villages nearby, those we know and see from time to time and those we never meet, whose stories reach us and which we repeat, so they become part of the shared fabric of the family. (Ashour 2014, p. 13)

For Palestinians, recalling memories as a commitment is the sole cruel to state their right to exist and avoid time from minimizing their sufferings. In this manner, the act of memory and memorialization got to be a political one. Their recollections work as an interchange to the topographical and political acknowledgment of their status. Moreover, the moral esteem of memory and recollections features constitute a mental impact that makes a difference in avoiding future catastrophes and empowers

the Palestinians to move on towards equality. Recollections can alter and make unused outlines of activities, by changing the relationship to the past by looking into and altering modern values and demeanors.

Within the context, Ashour embraces a comparative demeanor in her portrayal of memory, where memory is rising to the present as an announcement of self-affirmation. Rukia's uncle rehashes the stories of a country to his grandchildren. He tries his best to stamp Palestine's outline on their hearts. He denies halting his declaration work as a political act by reproducing the memory of the catastrophe. Besides, Rukia keeps the key to her family house in Palestine around her neck as an accessory. She is not the same person anymore, but most Palestinian ladies do that indeed though their houses are destroyed. This custom reproduces solidarity between the past and the present. Their capacities to affirm their character turn to their capacities to keep it in mind. Their declaration is not decreased to verbal tails or composed records, but it expands to the everyday rehashed propensities of unnoticed resistance. This kind of resistance makes a difference to form a strong future. Strength in this context can be accomplished through the act of everyday life and immaterial activities. Recollections and other daily rehashed exercises play a critical part in fueling the will to proceed to battle:

I tell my grandchildren tales about their great-grandmother, to amuse them. I tell them about their great-grandfather too. I say, "He used to love to tease her. Was it an old habit he had acquired when they were little, since he was her cousin and only four years older, or was it something

new that came after marriage? I don't know. He would intentionally pick a fight with her and she would take his words seriously. (Ashour 2014b, p. 11)

The leading emphasis Ashour has given about Palestinian culture in this novel is the issue of folklore dress. When Rukia's friend Wissal encompasses a discourse with an unusual individual, who approaches her to comment on her Palestinian dress. He demonstrates that it is an Israeli dress. Wissal makes it clear with outrage and enthusiasm that, this dress is immaculate Palestinian and nothing else. She will not permit any Israeli to require it from her "I worked late many nights to embroider this. It's called "peasant embroidery", and this is a Palestinian peasant dress. What does Israel have to do with it?" (Ashour 2014b, p. 256)

In this occurrence, Ashour shows the continuous allotment of Palestinian culture and legacy by Israeli lies. Ashour continuously uses culture such as eating propensities, dress, dialects, tunes, houses, and celebrations. Through these components, Ashour needs to stand within what she calls control of words, by setting the individuals back to claim their rights and to stand against all sorts of social and authentic apportionment. Wissal, Rukia's friend, is another witness to the Palestinian conflict. She acts as an exemplification of the Palestinian legacy that uncovers the profitable angles of culture and writing, she explains, "As soon as we entered the house, I asked Maryam to make our coffee, Wissal Said " put off the coffee, let's put things away first." She rolled up her Sleeves and took one of the suitcases she had brought to the kitchen and squatted down beside it and started to make out the food she had brought. She handed me three plastic bottles, tightly sealed, containing olive oil, and the three

others she had put olives..... this olive oil and olive from our trees, I would like to take that to Rukia even if she was living in an oil press.” (Ashour 2014, p. 326)

Ashour in this novel focuses on the angles of Palestinian encounters and way of life propensities to set up the envisioned social identities. This envisioned social identity depends on the shared recollections and social viewpoints that give a solid partner to the non-stop hardship of their rights and the need for a specialist with the official stages and universal community they have experienced. Ashour examines the importance of recollections and recognition from the first lines of the novel. When the heroine Rukia recollects her, to begin with, assembly with Yahya. She depicts how unexpectedly she recalls the occurrence, " Among the threshing floors were on the east side " on a different side of the town, away from the shore where she had seen him. Yet, Rukia leaves this ambiguity and says " I was tempted to run"(Ashour 2014, p.1) She wants to show the clashing nature of memory and recollection, and how the battle between absent-mindedness and the memory is going with the hero herself since her childhood. Occasionally, the method of memory uncovers the difficult viewpoints of life which cannot be forgotten or silenced. When Rukia remembers her first meeting with Yahya the expected groom, she explains how she remembers the incident “Among the threshing floors”, and admits to the impossibility of such a recollection “I know that threshing floors were on the east side...” on the other side of the town, away from the shore where she had seen Yahya. Nevertheless, Rukia leaves this ambiguity unquestioned and tells the reader: “I was tempted to run” (Ashour 2014, p. 1)

Conclusion:

In *The Woman from Tantoura*, Ashour discusses the Palestinian conflict through the character Rukia who survives and endures the diaspora. Through the character of Rukia and her family, Ashour describes the different paths that the Palestinians were forced to take after the conflict, and how they are affected by the hideous nature of the struggle. Searching for hidden stories and retelling the glory of the past is always used to overcome the misery of the present. It imposes an imaginary coherent to the experiences of dislocation and fragmentation. The image of homeland and the terrible experiences resulting from forced migration, loss of identity, and diminished communities recapture an imagined fullness and provide a source of resistance and identity. These factors make a narrative interesting and enlightening as well. Ashour in her novel shows the Palestinian trauma as a state of self-assertion. That's why Rukia's uncle repeats the same old story of the homeland of his ancestors. He wanted them to memorize the story of their homeland and the real map of Palestine. He makes a political act by repeating the memory of the conflict and maintains the only truth he knew. On the other hand, Rukia keeps the key to her home close to her body, as most Palestinians do; despite that, the houses no longer exist. Such habits create a unity between the present and the past. The practices of recollection and daily habits are interweaved with their ability to reform their identities. Ashour uses multiple narratives to enrich the experience of Palestinians and to achieve unity through shared suffering and experiences.

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