# The Land, Indigenous Identity, and Resistance in Native American and Palestinian Literatures:

# N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn and Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin as Illustration

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the complex interaction between land and indigenous identity in the literatures of Native Americans and Palestinians and to provide insights into the experiences of the two peoples in their struggle against colonial oppression. Within a post/decolonial framework and adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines the paradigms of culture, memory, nationhood and sovereignty, this study explores how place and relations to the land have been enacted in Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn and Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin, and how this connection to the land represents a means of identity affirmation and a symbol of resistance that enables a way of existence in this world. Undertaking this comparative study, which reveals the implicit and explicit connections between two disparate literatures, contributes to understanding interconnected experiences of settler colonialism and the ways indigenous writers contribute with counter-narratives in the nationalist movements of resistance and decolonization.

## Keywords

Land;
Indigenous identity;
Native American literature;
Palestinian literature;
Scott Momaday ;
Susan Abulhawa;
Post decolonial;
Inter-nationalism.

# الأرض، الهوية الأصلية، والمقاومة في الأدب الأمريكي الأصلي والأدب الفلسطيني: "بيت من الفجر" لسكوت موماداي و"صباحات في جنين" لسوزان أبو الهوى كمثال توضيحي

## ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف التفاعل بين الأرض والهوية الأصلية في أدب الأمريكيين الأصليين والفلسطينيين، وتقديم رؤى حول تجارب الشعبين في نضالهما ضد القمع الاستعماري. في إطار نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، وباتباع نهج متعدد التخصصات يجمع بين نماذج الثقافة والذاكرة والوطنية والسيادة، تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف تم تمثيل المكان والعلاقات بالأرض في رواية "بيت من الفجر" لسكوت موماداي ورواية "صباحات في جنين" لسوزان أبو الهوى، وكيف يمثل هذا الارتباط بالأرض وسيلة لتأكيد الهوية ورمزًا للمقاومة يُمكّن من إثبات الوجود في هذا العالم. إن إجراء هذه الدراسة المقارنة، التي تكشف عن الروابط الضمنية والصريحة بين أدبين متباينين، يُسهم في فهم التجارب المترابطة للاستعمار الاستيطاني، وكيف يُساهم الكُتّاب الأصليون في سرديات مضادة في الحركات القومية للمقاومة و إنهاء الاستعمار .

## الكلمات المفتاحية

الأرض؛
الهوية الأصلية؛
الأدب الأمريكي الأصلي؛
الأدب الفلسطيني؛
سكوت موماداي؛
سوزان أبو الهوى؛
ما بعد الاستعمار؛
العولمة القومية.

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## Introduction

Like all oppressed peoples enduring settler colonialism, Native Americans and Palestinians have been engaged for so long in struggles against colonial powers that seek to cast them out of human history. The traumatic histories of the two peoples have urged in recent decades writers to articulate narratives of resistance, reclaiming indigenous identities and emphasizing the ongoing struggle against systemic oppression, displacement, marginalization, and cultural erasure. By challenging the narratives imposed by colonial powers, the literatures of Native Americans and Palestinians serve as a means to counteract false histories about Indigenous peoples, to preserve their cultural heritage, and to reinforce their sense of identity and belonging to ancestral lands. The themes treated in their literatures represent a common concern of reclaiming indigenous identities deeply rooted in their lands. Thus, the land is at the centre of anticolonial resistance, and in the words of Palestinian professor Ala Alazzeh, "the land remains the center of gravity" (qtd. in Nabulsi 33). This connection to the land holds deep cultural and spiritual significance, maintaining social and cultural practices that have been transmitted to younger generations through various traditions of storytelling. After long periods of silence and exclusion, it was from the second half of the 20th century that both American Natives and Palestinians have become engaged with cultural preservation and identity issues that are deeply connected to their ancestral territories. In the following sections, the theoretical framework will be established to examine the significance of the land and its articulation in literature as a central element in affirming Indigenous identity. The study illustrates with representative works of Native American and Palestinian literatures, highlighting the interconnectedness between the two experiences in the inter/national struggle for liberation and indigenous sovereignty.

## 1. Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

In discussing the literature written by colonized peoples, the postcolonial theories seem indispensable. However, regarding the ongoing struggle of peoples under settler colonialism in many parts of the world, there is a methodological shift in prioritizing issues of resistance and liberation from the still-dominant oppressive colonial powers, without overlooking the strategies of assessing the colonial discourse and addressing the mechanisms of colonialism. Instead of the more theoretical and more academic postcolonialism operating within the postmodern/postructuralist trends of thought, the colonial situation in territories under settler colonialism calls for a more practical and political frame that corresponds with the indigenous peoples' and writers' combat for cultural identity and national sovereignty. The American scholar of Palestinian and Jordanian descent Steven Salaita prefers the "theory of decolonization" which he adopts in his studies of indigenous peoples' struggle against settler colonialism, and he acknowledges that "Frantz Fanon provides perhaps the most famous theory of decolonization in *The Wretched of the Earth*" (Salaita *Inter/Nationalism* xii). Indeed, Fanon stresses that "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder ... Decolonization, we know, is an historical process" (36). In Fanon's theory, decolonization is identified with "disorder," which refers to the total subversion and dismantling of colonial authority, and is defined as a historical process that subverts and rejects completely the colonial rule and order.

Following Fanon, many scholars adhere to this concept of decolonization, including Edward Said whose large corpus contributed to the resistance movements in the world and initiated the writing back narratives of the colonized. Said argues that the colonizer's aim is the "blotting out of knowledge" of the colonized transforming them "into people without history." Said refers to this process as the "moral epistemology of imperialism" (*The Question of Palestine* 18). And because in the history of colonialism, military control and colonization of the mind are inseparable, Said views that the extirpation of colonial occupation from the ancestral lands can be complete only by dismantling the false western narratives that shape the commonly held perceptions about the indigenous peoples and by expunging the colonizer from education system, culture, and self-image (*Culture and Imperialism* 288). In this vein, Said joins Fanon in his argument by stating that "the struggle must be lifted to a new level of contest, a synthesis represented by a war of liberation, for which an entirely new post-nationalist theoretical culture is required" (*Culture and Imperialism* 267-268).

On the other hand, Native American scholar Eric Cheyfitz draws attention to the fact that postcolonial studies have mostly ignored Native American colonial context which he attributes to the domination of the field by "African, Asian, and Caribbean agendas and paradigms grounded in the transformation of indigenous and creole societies in these locales into contemporary forms of the European nation-state … [and] in the transformation of these situations into neocolonial or postcolonial predicaments" (The (Post)Colonial Construction 4). Therefore, Cheyfitz suggests the term (post)colonial as an alternative framework to situate these literatures in their social, political, and historical contexts, and he explains, "I place the 'post' in parentheses to register the particularity of the ongoing colonial regime in Indian country, where Native citizens of the United States are simultaneously colonized citizens of Indian nations" (5). More importantly, these colonized citizens "find themselves negotiating in their daily lives a complex dialectic of the colonial and the postcolonial," and thus, "the project of U.S. American Indian literatures in the contemporary period (post–1924) is the representation of this dialectic" (5). Scholars Jodi A. Byrd and Michael Rothberg summarize the tensions between postcolonial and Indigenous studies as deriving from "indigenous people's sense of living under ongoing colonial projects—and not just colonial legacies—and from postcolonial studies' over-reliance on models of colonialism in South Asia and Africa that do not necessarily speak to the settler colonies of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand" (1). Thus they argue that "indigenous peoples must be central to any theorizations of the conditions of postcoloniality" (xiv).

Following this approach, Native scholar Craig Womack brings Cheifitz's perspective to the study of Native literature by arguing: "I will seek a literary criticism that emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism, confronts racism, discusses sovereignty and Native nationalism, seeks connections between literature and liberation struggles, and, finally, roots literature in land and culture" (11). Stuart Hall joins the critique of postcolonial studies by stating that the concept is "used to mark the final closure of a historical epoch, as if colonialism and its effects are definitively over" (When Was 'the Post-Colonial' 1996, 244). In fact, Indigenous peoples across North America, Palestine, and many other parts in the world share clear similarities as they are still targeted by genocidal policies and settler colonialism. Examining texts from across these areas requires engagements with the memories of colonialism, the socio-economic injustices, and the resilience of cultural traditions of indigenous peoples. For the sake of this paper's comparative study of the Native American and Palestinian literatures with the emphasis on the interconnectedness between the land and indigenous identity and the ongoing anti-colonial struggle for self-determination, I tend to contextualize this study within the purview of the post/decolonial. This methodology relies on both postcolonial and decolonial methods exploring simultaneously the concepts of culture, memory, and the notions of nationhood, sovereignty, and inter/nationalist solidarity.

Reclaiming the colonized peoples' places and the cultural identities of these places is grounded in the affirmation of their indigenous culture that is considered foundational in their struggle for national sovereignty. With its complex connotations, culture is viewed by Stuart Hall as "a discursive formation that is connected to matters of power and politics, and to the need to representations of and 'for' marginalized social groups" (Cultural Studies, 278). Hall emphasizes the relationship between culture and identity, maintaining that culture is "a site of representation and resistance, and where the symbolic is a source of identity" (Cultural Studies, 784). He equally asserts that identity depends on the use of "the resources of history, language, and culture" to determine how people might represent themselves; therefore, identities are "constituted within, not outside representation. They arise from the narrativization of the self" (Who Needs an Identity, 4). Stressing the power of culture as a political practice that serves as a means of reclaiming identity with relation to place (land), Chris Barker affirms that culture "is never a neutral or objective phenomenon but a matter of positionality, of the place from which one speaks, to whom, and for what purposes" (5).

In close relation to the concepts of culture and identity, memory and nostalgia have a vital function in "humans' consciousness of themselves as having distinct identities over time" (Rossington and Whitehead 2). In the post/decolonial context, individual and collective memory, whether painful or comforting, plays a functioning role in conceiving a community's past, regaining the ancestral cultural heritage, and protecting this heritage from erasure. In this type of indigenous writing, personal and collective memories are used as an anti-colonial strategy to subvert the colonial discourse and firmly maintain their indigenous identity and their belonging to their ancestral lands. Nostalgia, on the other hand, is commonly defined "as a sentimental remembrance or yearning for a return to some irrecoverable past," and it "has often been studied as a complex psychological trait and cultural practice" (Pal 50). In this sense, nostalgic feelings, which refer to an "inability to accept the loss of the past" and can be "detrimental to psychological well-being," work positively as a means of "self-enhancement and social connectedness" (Batcho 356). Payel Pal summarizes the benefits of nostalgia, arguing that it "can boost one's sense of selfhood and promote individuals' social inclinations . . . [it is] productive of affirmative attitudes and social bonding among people deprived of favourable living conditions" (50).

Through these concepts of culture, memory, and nostalgia, the aim of indigenous peoples and their cultural and literary productions is the achievement of nationhood and sovereignty over their territories. In his theory regarding the notion of nationhood, Homi Bhabha considers that the nation is reconstituted on the basis of cultural identity of people. He contends that this reconstitution is a matter of narratives that comprise myths, folk stories, and folk beliefs and traditions that foster a sense of national belonging (300). Bhabha believes that nations are similar to narratives that have to be discovered, and he encourages colonized peoples of carving the nation via what he calls a "counter-narrative" and collecting national memory (300). According to this viewpoint, it is clear that the sense of nation for many indigenous peoples under settler colonialism is, to a large extent, formed and built through yearning, memory and imagination. However, liberation from colonial subjugation would never be achieved without sovereignty that constitutes the backbone of the theory of decolonization. Scott Richard Lyons defines sovereignty as "the guiding story in our pursuit of self-determination, the general strategy by which we aim to best recover our losses from the ravages of colonization: our lands, our languages, our cultures, our self-respect. For indigenous peoples everywhere, sovereignty is the beacon by which we seek the paths to agency and power and community renewal" (449). Therefore, indigenous sovereignty became prominent as a concept in indigenous discourse from the mid-twentieth century "around which social movements formed and political agendas for decolonization and social justice were articulated" (Barker 1). For indigenous peoples, sovereignty must be derived from cultural integrity and continuity which are tied to "power from the *land*" (Lyons 477).

In their struggle for sovereignty, the future of Indigenous peoples resides in the nationalist movements and activities that undertake both the political struggle and the cultural revival of their ancestral heritage deeply rooted in their lands. The role of writers is fundamentally vital and contributes massively to the Indigenous nationalist movements throughout the world. In this process, Steven Salaita proposes the theory of inter/nationalism which he defines as "an amalgamation of what is sometimes called solidarity, transnationalism, intersectionality, kinship, or intercommunalism . . . it encourages and assesses the play of decolonial narratives across cultures and colonial borders . . . [and] encourages the possibility of putting nationalisms into conversation or, more ambitiously, into collective practice" (*Inter/Nationalism* ix). In his examination of how modern Palestinian and Native literatures react to the colonial discourses and are committed to mutual liberation, Salaita urges for a "reciprocal struggle" since "colonial discourses in North America and Palestine arise from the same moral and philosophical narratives of settlement" (x). Therefore, the present comparative study adopts the post/decolonial approach and highlights the importance of the theory of inter/nationalism in establishing a network of

solidarity that spans cultures, nationalities, and races in the process of reclaiming the colonized lands and recovering Indigenous identities.

## 2. Genocides and Historical Traumas

The histories of the indigenous people of the United States and Palestine offer two similar, if not identical, models of settler colonialism that has befallen them for centuries and that inform much of their literature as well as their scholarly production and activist movements. Situated on two continents, the two communities share inherent features and deep affinities concerning the historical and cultural traumas and the ongoing struggle against the settler colonial powers that stole their lands and destroyed their identities. Steven Salaita remarks that "the rhetorical techniques of the dominant power in both cases [are]similar … Even the language colonialists used in their errands was the same, as with the concepts of 'noble savage' and 'chosen people'" (*The Holy Land* 3). Thus, to illuminate the comparative analysis of the literary works in this paper, it is of significant worth to shed light on the key and crucial moments in Native American and Palestinian history of the last two centuries.

In the Native American context, the pre-1492 territories were among the most culturally diverse areas of the world with "more than three hundred cultures, each differentiated to a greater or lesser degree by language, custom, history, and lifeway" (Dorris 147). Native peoples on the territory now known as the United States of America self-identify according to tribal affiliation such as Cherokee, Chickasaw, Mohawk, Apache, or Cheyenne; and in their traditional way of life, "societal diversity was accepted, tolerated, and assumed, and each group took pride in its own distinctive features, including its own oral (literary) traditions" (Dorris 148). The arrival of European settlers on the continent was accompanied with the massive diffuse of ideas about the natives that constitute America's founding myth of Manifest Destiny and that still dominate the national consciousness and imagination of Americans to the present day. In an article published in 2005, American Professor of philosophy Michael Berliner reinforces the idea as historical truth:

> Prior to 1492, what is now the United States was sparsely inhabited, unused, and undeveloped. The inhabitants were primarily hunter/gatherers, wandering across the land, living from hand to mouth and from day to day. There was virtually no change, no growth for thousands of years. With rare exception, life was nasty, brutish, and short: there was no wheel, no written language, no division of labor, little agriculture and scant permanent settlement; but there were endless, bloody wars. Whatever the problems it brought, the vilified Western culture also brought enormous, undreamed-of benefits, without which most of today's Indians would be infinitely poorer or not even alive.

The early decades of colonial establishment were characterized by the practice of treaty-making between the Indian nations and the European settlers that kept peaceful relationships, governed trade, and allowed the acquisition of tribal lands for settlement. The successive periods that followed the creation of the United States and continued for more than two centuries have been identified as the darkest episodes in the history of Indian communities and the history of settler colonialism. With the westward push of settlement, the Indians began losing more and more territories and endured successive genocides and traumatic experiences through epochs characterized by extermination and forced relocation and assimilation.

Through these episode of colonization, the 1830s marked the start of the Removals era with the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that forced many Eastern Indian tribes to relocate to unsettled and 'reserved' territories west of the Mississippi and placed these tribes under the plenary power of the U.S. federal government. The forced relocation resulted in "a trauma including months in concentration camps and finally the long march of the Cherokee people that resulted in thousands of deaths and came to be called the 'Trail of Tears'" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 30). This historical tragedy was followed by the General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) of 1887, "an act designed to end traditional ways of life for Indian tribes by breaking communal tribal lands into individual allotments" and "to take land away from Indians so effectively that in the forty-five years following the Dawes Act's passage 90 million acres passed from Indian ownership" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 30). During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the 'Indian Wars' succeeded in which indigenous peoples were the tragic victims. Alongside these bloody encounters, the legislative manoeuvres continued during a period called the assimilation era when the U.S. government attempted to assimilate Natives through the imposition of U.S. citizenship and educating their children in boarding schools on and off reservations. With the passage of birthright citizenship in 1924, Natives were considered "domestic subjects" as "indigenous lands were always already domestic to the United States and its indigenous peoples inevitable subjects of nationalization" (Piatote 8). Beth Piatote writes about this traumatic episode, "The forced removal of indigenous children from their families to attend government-funded boarding and day schools" represents "control over Indian futures—children, culture, land, and imagination" (1, 4). He avows that "Assimilation-era policies were driven by the notion that the tribal-national polity … must be destroyed. And the way to break up the tribe was to break up the Indian family and to cultivate children's allegiance to the United States rather than to the tribe" (5). Writing in 1992, Louis Owens unfolds that "on reservations today, more than 90 percent of Native American children up for adoption are adopted into non-Indian families, an institutionalized 'mainstreaming' of Indian children into Euramerica that results in widespread loss of cultural identity" (*Other Destinies* 4-5).

Urged by the heavy enlistment and participation of Indians in both World Wars, there was a shift in the lives of indigenous peoples as they moved in great numbers from rural reservations into urban cities. In this new setting, they suffered the double pain of discrimination and the difficulty of reintegration in the traditional life in the reservations. In fact, "the relocation program designed to move Indians from poor reservations to jobs and greater prosperity in the cities helped to create a generation of displaced urban Indians" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 31). In parallel, the early decades of

the twentieth century saw the abandonment of aggressive assimilation through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 that "facilitated a return to tribal self-governance, in part by restoring tribal management of resources such as land; and assisted in the creation of tribally controlled educational resources" (Madsen 7). However, the U.S. government reversed its position and adopted a policy of 'Termination' in 1953 in the form of the House Concurrent Resolution 108, the result of which was traumatic for many tribes that were 'terminated' and forced to join the American mainstream. Under this aggressive resolution, "tribal sovereignty was abolished," with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Program "ending federal recognition of and responsibility for more than 109 tribes" (Madsen 10).

The impact of termination on Indian tribes and individuals was devastating in spite of the passing of the Indian Civil Rights Act in 1968 that granted certain rights to Indians as American citizens, but also as citizens of their respective Indian nations. The situation of limited tribal sovereignty and being considered as 'domestic dependent nations' under the United States law created tensions in relation to "inter-nation diplomacy, management of environments and environmental resources, non-human animals, food, health, religion, and the forms of activism required to ensure the survivance of these forms of tribal sovereignty" (Madsen 12). By this time, the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s filtered the Indian communities, urging political activism of the Red Power and the organization of American Indian Movements as a response to the "ongoing colonial structure on the over 340 federally recognized tribes in the lower forty-eight states" (Cheyfitz, The Global Correspondence 471). Until the present time, with 573 federally recognized Indian Tribes as of last count (www.usa.gov/tribes), these tribes are referred to as tribal nations, and 'Nation,' here, does not mean 'state' as the limited sovereignty these political entities continue to have is not the full sovereignty of nation-states. In fact, living on reservations within the oversight of federal bureaucracies and laws continues to destroy the Natives' relationship to their ancestral land which is the source that defines their identity and gives meaning to their existence. As Madsen states, "sovereignty is a claim to land that makes possible the claim to identity" (12). In this sense, Jace Weaver argues:

> When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and their identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals, and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed. (38)

Intersecting with the Native American experience, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over landownership is the world's most intricate discords that has caused the suffering of millions of Palestinians for more than a century. Referred to as the 'Holy Land' in the three monotheistic religions and being the main battlefield of the Crusades, the land of Palestine has been the object of countless incursions that ended by the establishment of the state of Israel in a painful history of settler colonialism. European interest in Palestine came to prominence in the 19th century justified by its biblical history as Barbara Parmenter points out, "Adventurers, missionaries, explorers, and tourists were eager to visit a country possessing such powerful associations with their religious and cultural heritage. Defenders of both faith and science felt that they could demonstrate the truths of the Bible through archaeological and ethnographic explorations in the Holy Land" (9). The Western image of Palestine was shaped by the discourse constructed by those explorers about a land of prosperity as described in the Bible which was turned into poor condition in the hands of the Palestinians and under Ottoman control. According to Parmenter, "the eighteenth and nineteenth century's obsession with innovation and improvement in agriculture and industry… reinforced religious aspirations to Christianize (or later Judaize) Palestine in fulfillment of biblical prophecies" (9).

Prior to the British occupation, Palestinian lands were under Ottoman rule for four centuries during which Palestinian farmers developed a landholding system called *mushã* tenure. Although the Ottoman state owned the majority of the agricultural land, "at the core of this village-based communal culture was the extended Palestinian family group or *hamula*, which provided economic and social support to family members ... This cultural foundation of *mushã* tenure is what enabled Palestinian cultivators to develop their own idea of moral economics ... This moral right, in turn, gave the cultivator a sense of being anchored to the landscape" (Fields 187). In contrast to this image, European missionaries reported an abandoned and desolate land and primitive uncivilized inhabitants who do not deserve such sacred land. An example of such description was reported by W. J. Stracey to the *Times* of London in 1880 under the title "Palestine as It Is and as It Might Be":

> Nothing can well exceed the desolateness of much of it … the villages nothing but mud huts, dust, dirt, and squalor; the inhabitants with scarce clothing enough for decency, their houses—ovens; large tracts without a horse or cow, sheep or dog; no pretence at roads except from Jaffa to Jerusalem … The towns are filthy in the extreme, none more so than Jerusalem itself.... This is a picture, I believe, in no way overdrawn, of that land which was once "flowing with milk and honey". (qtd. in Parmenter 9-10)

A similar vision was provided by an American missionary named William M. Thomson who refers to the Jewish historian of the first century Josephus and his description of the prosperous Galilee region and he comments, "The soil may be as good as ever, the climate the same, but where are the walnuts, the figs, the olives, the grapes and the other fruits . . . Alas! all gone . . . and there are no inhabitants .. . to cultivate this 'ambition of Nature'" (qtd. in Parmenter 11). In addition, Edward Said reports samples of Zionist discourse about Palestine in the late 19th century, namely Claude R. Conder in his article "Present Condition of Palestine" (1879), in which he describes the Palestinian peasantry as "brutally ignorant, fanatical, stupid, and above all, inveterate liars, which can only be found in Orientals" (qtd. in *The Question of Palestine* 80). Similarly, British Army officer Lord Kitchener writes in the *Survey of Galilee* in 1878: "we hope to rescue from the hands of that ruthless destroyer, the uneducated Arab … the synagogue of Capernaum" (qtd. in *The Question of Palestine* 80).

The descriptions provided by Western biblical historians, explorers, and archaeologists paved the way for a new form of possession of Palestine with the assumption of a Holy Land holding a spiritual meaning for the Jewish people. In the Zionist narrative, the image of Palestine refers to the two concepts in Judaism: the Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel, and Zion, the holy and Promised Land for the chosen people of God. Considering themselves living in exile, "the return to Zion promised personal and communal redemption in fulfillment of prophecy. Discrimination against Jews and their persecution in Europe served only to reinforce the experience of exile and increase the yearning for Zion" (Halpern 121). Thus, the first wave of Jewish emigration to Palestine began from Russia, encouraged by the Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion) movement that was founded in 1884. These first emigrants purchased lands from the Arabs and established agricultural colonies called *moshavot* that were mostly funded by the philanthropist and banker Baron Edmund de Rothschild (Parmenter 16). After the First Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl, the Zionist movement took shape with the political programme of establishing a national homeland for the Jewish people. Reflecting the image of Palestine in the West as a ruined land waiting for revival, the Zionists adopted the slogan 'A land without people for a people without land.' Palestinian historian Nur Masalha ironically comments:

> When discussing the history of Israel, many biblical scholars and Israeli publicists begin with a section entitled the 'Land of Israel'. The land, until the arrival of European Jewish settlers, is virtually barren, desolate and empty, waiting to be made fertile and populated by Israel; it is the rightful property of Jews (a divinely 'chosen people'). (4)

With the establishment of the British Mandate in 1917, the new rulers proceeded to weaken the traditional system of landholding and to convert the land into individual property that was sold to Zionists who adopted the vision of settlement and "revival through labor on the land" (Parmenter 18). In the same year, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Belfour issued the Balfour Declaration which promised a national home for the Jewish people, and the final charter that indicated the historical right of the Jews to the land of Israel was approved in 1923 (Morris 9-10). Prior to the establishment of the state of Israel and in an identical way with the American Natives' experience with European settlers, the Zionists adopted the strategy of displacement and replacement. The first refers to the evacuation of the Palestinians from their lands by terrorizing them or by purchasing their properties while the second means to transfer Jews from all over the world to Palestine (Al-Ma'amari et al. 32). Zionist leader Theodor Herzl is quoted from his diary by Benny Morris declaring: "We must expropriate gently . . . We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries . . . Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and circumspectly" (41).

Endorsed by the imperial powers, the state of Israel was created in 1948, marking the beginning of one of the harrowing tragedies of the twentieth century that resulted in the dispersal of Palestinians and the violent disintegration of their society and the changing of their entire fate. The *Nakba*, as known in the Arab world, caused over 780,000 Palestinians to leave their homes and villages and led to the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees. Actually, "between 77 and 83 percent of the Palestinians who lived in the part of Palestine that later became Israel – i.e. 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine – were turned into refugees" (Sa'di 175). The tactics of Zionist militias included massacres, rapes, and spreading terror among Palestinians, and as Ahmed Sa'di states "about 418 villages were erased, and out of twelve Palestinian or mixed towns, a Palestinian population continued to exist in only seven" (184). Additionally, the Israeli settlers worked to erase the Palestinian existence by desertifying the occupied territories and "uprooting hundreds of thousands of Palestinian farms and trees especially olive and orange trees" to prove the Zionist narrative of a desolate land (Massad 176). Israel Shahak, an Israeli professor, states:

> The truth about Arab settlement which used to exist before 1948, is one of the most guarded secrets of Israeli life … so that the accepted official myth of "an empty country" can be taught and accepted in the Israeli schools and told to visitors. … This falsification is especially grave as it is accepted universally, outside the Middle East, and because the villages were destroyed completely, with their houses, garden walls, and even cemeteries, so that literally a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told that "it was all desert." (qtd. in Massad 39)

Since 1948, the term 'refugee' became associated with the Palestinians who have been forced into an exodus that continues to befall them to the present day. Considered as stateless and denied the right to return to their homes and villages, Palestinian refugees are dispersed throughout the world, in North and Latin America, and recently in Europe, and forced to exile even within their own homeland in refugee camps similar to American Natives' reservations. According to Palestinian statistics reported by Abbas Shiblak in 2009,

> Most Palestinian refugees live in WBG [West Bank, Gaza strip] and the neighbouring Arab states of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. There are more than 10 million Palestinians, three-quarters of whom are displaced. More than half are displaced outside the borders of their historical homeland, while a further quarter of a million are displaced inside Israel, having had their original property expropriated. (2)

The catastrophic impact of the Zionist settler occupation is portrayed by Ahmed Sa'di as follows:

> El Nakba was the moment in history when the Palestinians' world order, which had been considered part of the "laws of nature", was violently and dramatically altered: their legal rights as having personae – that is, as being legal subjects – were greatly diminished or obliterated altogether. Their cultural and physical environment underwent a dramatic transformation; and their existence as national community ceased to be taken for granted. (185)

The state of Israel pursued the project of occupation through ethnic cleansing in another traumatic episode which is *El Naksa* (Six-Day War) in 1967. In the aftermath of the attack, Israel took control of the Golan Heights from Syria and the

West Bank and the Gaza Strip which were ruled by Jordan and Egypt respectively. The disaster caused the flight and expulsion of 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians out of the captured territories (Bowker 81), thus deepening the trauma of refugees with its social, political, and cultural dimensions.

In spite of the peace negotiations which began after the 1967 War and the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) following the Oslo Accords (1993-95), the Zionist territorial project and the continuous assaults on Palestinian lands and civilian population intensified, resulting in gross loss of lives and everlasting traumas. In fact, corresponding with the false sovereignty of the Indian Nations, the Palestinian Authority represents "a severely limited form of self-governance … [it] has the privilege to exercise severely restricted autonomy in a few fragments of the West Bank (already a fragment of Palestine). In exchange, it collaborates with Israel in such a way as to ensure settler colonization of the West Bank continues" (Nabulsi 36-37). In such situation, the state of Israel imposes its military law in the West Bank that results in arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, and continues its creation of settlements that pushes Palestinian inhabitants to live in refugee camps that resemble those reserved for American Natives. Even the proposed "two-state solution" was utterly an attempt by Israel and the United States to create a "domestic dependent nation" with what was left of Palestine for the Palestinians (Cheifitz, The Global Correspondence 474). Alongside this process, Israel has pursued its genocidal acts that included namely the Sabra and Shatila massacre against the Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in 1982, the Blockade of Gaza Strip that started from 2007, and the multiple invasions of Gaza, including the latest war of 2023 that resulted in thousands of deaths of Palestinians and the decimation of the majority of Gaza.

Confronted by this crisis of losing their homeland, enduring perpetual genocides, and suffering cultural trauma, Palestinians "were far from passive. They refused to accept as God's will the taking of their land by a group of people supposedly chosen for such a task" (Fields 199). Palestinian resistance, which began from the early decades of Zionist settlement, has been organized by both those who stayed in Palestine despite the difficult circumstances and the diasporas who have helped to maintain the Palestinian cause on the international agenda despite the Zionist lobbying in the US to put the Palestinian issue into oblivion. In the face of the Zionist attempts to push Palestinians out and to raze their cultural sites and thus to destroy any connection the Palestinians have with their land, resistance has taken the form of 'sumud,' meaning 'steadfastness,' popular resistance through strikes and marches, political activism, and armed struggle launched by the different armed groups after the Six-Day War of 1967. The other form of resistance consists of the writing back of Palestinian writers and intellectuals that contributes in the ongoing struggle for decolonization, the affirmation of the Palestinian indigenous identity, and the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland.

The experiences of Native Americans and Palestinians with settler colonialism characterized by the theft of land, the loss of sovereignty, the loss of thousands of lives, and the loss of indigenous identity fall under the aegis of genocide. In fact, genocide does not simply refer to the physical extermination of peoples; it is "a psychological as well as physiological attack on humanity that has far-reaching effects on survivors and their descendants" (Sheffield 94). In this sense, acts of genocide which are committed against people and their culture and identity result in enduring traumas that are experienced by generations living even centuries later. Sociologist Jeffrey Alexander asserts that trauma "occurs when members of collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (std in El Sayed Raslan 187). In the context of settler colonialism, historical trauma and cultural trauma are closely connected in the way peoples are separated from the foundations of their indigenous identity and they are subject to reconstruction through stereotypical tropes like "savage" and "dying breed" (Sheffield 95). It is the history of these genocides and the ensuing cultural traumas that inform the writings of the peoples who are still under the oppressive colonial control. In the contemporary world, literature has become a means of healing from those transgenerational traumas and a form of resistance and positive identity construction.

## 3. The Land and Indigenous Identity in *House Made of Dawn* and *Mornings in Jenin*

The two novels under study in this section demonstrate the significance of the land in the cultural and identity revitalization and its symbolic role in the resistance against settler colonialism. Written in a new era of Red Power and indigenous self-determination, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) was a breakthrough of Native American literature and the first work by an American Indian to win the Pulitzer Prize. The novel is grounded in the dislocation of its protagonist Abel, a young mixed-race member of Walatowa, the native name for the Jemez Pueblo located near Albuquerque, New Mexico, who returns home after service in World War II. Alienated after experiencing the trauma of a white-man's war, Abel fails to reintegrate into his tribe's culture and he cannot articulate his identity as an Indian. His confusion and his feeling of dislocation from his cultural roots lead him to murder an albino, whom he sees as a witch, and he is subsequently incarcerated. After his release, he is relocated to Los Angeles where he meets a group of fellow relocated Indians such as Tosamah (a Kiowa known as the Priest of the Sun) and Ben (a Navajo). However, his attempts to find a place in the urban milieu fail, leading him to excessive drinking and to quit his job. Abel returns home after being harshly beaten by a police officer, and upon his arrival, he finds his grandfather Francisco dying. Informed by his grandfather's teaching, he begins to re-engage with his Jemez culture and the novel ends with Abel joining the dawn runners.

*Mornings in Jenin*, on the other hand, tells the story and experiences of four generations of the Palestinian family of Abulheja from Ein Hod, an agricultural village located near Haifa, through the narration of Amal, the youngest daughter of the family. The novel documents the main historical periods that followed the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 when the Abulheja family is forced to live as refugees in the Jenin camp. The eight main parts of the novel refer to these

historical periods from 'El Nakba' to the massacre of Jenin refugee camp in 2002. Through flashbacks, the story follows the Abulheja family, Yehya and Basima and their two sons Hasan and Darweesh, in Ein Hod where they used to live as farmers before their tragic dispossession in 1948. The eldest son Hasan marries Dalia who gives birth to two sons, Yousef and Ishmael, and later to a girl named Amal. During their exodus from Ein Hod, Ishmael was taken from his mother's arms by an Israeli soldier and was raised by an Israeli childless couple that named him David who later becomes an Israeli soldier fighting his own people. Years after the occupation, Yehya stealthily returns to Ain Hod which has become a Jewish colony, and in his second return, he has never come back to Jenin. During the period of 'El Naksa,' Amal's father disappears, her brother Yousef leaves Jenin and enlists in the Palestinian Armed resistance, and her mother who is devastated by the loss of a child and slips into dementia dies. Amal is taken to an orphanage in Jerusalem where she receives education and then gets a scholarship to the the United States where she changes her name to 'Amy' and experiences Western life. In the United States, she receives a phone call from her brother Yousef inviting her to join him in Lebanon where she finds a job as a teacher and she marries her brother's friend Majid. However, her husband, her brother's wife and the latter's baby are killed in the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982 while she is waiting Majid to join her in the United States after she has escaped the violence in the camp. Amal gives birth to Sara, and years later she makes her last visit to Jenin with her daughter. When the Israeli troops assailed the refugee camp in 2002, Amal is killed, leaving her daughter Sara to carry the hopes of Palestinians to return to their homeland.

*House made of Dawn* and *Mornings in Jenin* are individual as well as collective stories grounded in history and depicting the deep attachment of Native Americans and Palestinians to their land. Due to settler colonialism and the attempts of colonial powers to eradicate the identity of indigenous peoples, the characters in the two novels go through experiences of alienation, homelessness, and liminality, carrying in their memory the image and the cultural heritage of their homeland that are transmitted from one generation to another. It is through memory and narration that the land takes vivacity and the culture that stems from it is kept alive. Momaday writes of the period known to Native Americans as the "Relocation" years and presents Abel, his protagonist, undergoing successive experiences of forced assimilation: the army and urban relocation. Similarly, the narration of Amal in *Mornings* traces the traumatic history of dispossession and the dispersion of Palestinians through the individual experiences of a Palestinian family that has witnessed the tragedy throughout four generations. The land in these stories constitutes a catalyst for cultural and identity revitalization and a symbol of resistance to settler colonialism. Maintaining this fact, the two novels open with descriptions of the landscapes of their homeland with reminiscences of memorable past events that recall a happy traditional way of life characterized by an intimate connection to the land.

### 3.1. The Land as a Catalyst for Cultural and Identity Revitalization in *House Made of Dawn*

*House Made of Dawn* opens with a prologue that leads readers to enter Native space through the tradition of oral storytelling evoked by the first word "Dypaloh," a Towan word (the language of Jemez Pueblo) signalling the beginning of the story and the equivalent to the English "once upon a time." The prologue offers a vision of the Navajo Night Chant: "There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain," and then it provides an image of the place, "the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around" (1). This lyrical description of the landscape of Walatowa, or Jemez, attests the timeless mythic and imaginative dimension of the vision of the Native inhabitants of the land. The description of the Jemez Pueblo landscape with its ancient homes moves to the traditional way of life of Natives who continue to work the fields with "handmade plows and hoes," their labor conducted by the tracking of sun and moon:

> The townsmen work all summer in the fields. When the moon is full, they work at night with ancient, handmade plows and hoes, and if the weather is good and the water plentiful they take a good harvest from the fields. They grow the things that can be preserved easily: corn and chilies and alfalfa. On the town side of the river there are a few orchards and patches of melons and grapes and squash. Every six or seven years there is a great harvest of *Piñones* far to the east of the town. That harvest, like the deer in the mountains, is the gift of God. (5-6)

Testifying the power of nature as an active agent that shapes people's lives and activities, natural phenomena and atmospheric forces are believed to have human-like inner lives with supernatural powers which humans must respect and to which they submit themselves. Drawing on the Navajo and the Pueblo cultures with which Momaday is intimately familiar, the natural elements and phenomena such as the wind, the sun, the seasons, and the mountains are depicted as animate agents, and some geographical features are associated with mythological events and are worshiped as sacred sanctuaries. In Southwestern Indian cosmology, the sun is considered a life-giving deity that governs the seasonal and cyclical activities of humans, and thus it is made the subject of prayers and offerings. In addition, the seasons in traditional Southwestern calendars must be approached with strict observations and ceremonial offerings. Momaday explains this Native ideology of the landscape by stating, "the Native American ethic with respect to the physical world is a matter of reciprocal appropriation: appropriations in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience" (Native American Attitudes 80).

In *House*, Abel's alienation is felt throughout the novel and even before his experience in the war. It is a state that is identified by Robert Nelson as 'anomie,' which is the state of unrest and spiritual malaise and of being unable to identify with the surrounding cultural environment (*Place and Vision* 109). In the first scene where Abel appears, he is shown running alone at dawn with a description of the landscape in winter when "the valley was gray with rain, and snow lay out

upon the dunes ... [the sun] rose into eclipse, and a dark and certain shadow came upon the land. And Abel was running" (1). This image of Abel's attempt to reintegrate his community and the land of his ancestors is provided alongside the image of a bleak landscape and a gloomy weather that make him seem "almost to be standing still, very little and alone" (2). This indicates, as the narrator evokes, that "his return to the town had been a failure" (58). When Abel first returns home from the war, he is so drunk he cannot even stand up or recognize his grandfather who must drive him home in the back of a wagon. This shaky beginning is followed in days to come by Abel's inability to speak to his grandfather and his inability to gather the shattered words and to express his feelings; "he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it … he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon, the way the women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn, but he had not got the right words together … he was dumb. Not dumb but inarticulate" (58-59). In spite of the presence of Peublo–Navajo tradition within him "like memory, in the reach of his hearing" (57), his motivations and feelings remain opaque and inscrutable. His alienation is further intensified by his obscure parentage and his being a mixed-blood; Abel "did not know who his father was … an outsider anyway" (11). Being a mixed-race is one of the consequences of the disruption of the Native societies after the settlement of Europeans that led to the estrangement of Native people on their own lands. Being unable to articulate his identity and to unify past and present, Abel "had the sense of being all alone, as if he were already miles and months away, gone long ago from the town and the valley and the hills, from everything he knew and had always known" (23).

The cure for Abel's disease of alienation depends on his identification with the landscape where the experiences of his life happen to have taken place. And in the process of identification with the land, he must identify with tribal culture and traditions encoded in stories, ceremonies, feast days, and other rituals that are orchestrated by the natural elements, and more particularly by the sun as a life-giving deity. Through his journey from his home to war, to prison, to Los Angeles, and finally to home again, Abel moves back and forth in time, shedding light on the ceremonial rhythms of his community and the rupture of these rhythms under colonial power. Through this journey of identification, Momaday provides cultural elements from three Native American traditions of Jemez Pueblo, Navajo, and Kiowa that are grounded in the strong belief that human life is an extension of the life of the land. After returning from his traumatizing experience in WWII, Abel is more confused and dislocated, and in a knife fight, he kills an albino from his tribe who has publicly beaten him during a ceremonial event because of his failure to perform tribal customs appropriately. Abel's act which leads to his jail sentence and his further alienation represents an act of revenge and slaying of an enemy which is symbolic of his attempt to resolve the cultural identity crisis he suffers from. In fact, the whiteness of the victim suggests the harmful and destructive legacy of Euro-American culture on Native societies as it is revealed in his trial: "He had killed the white man … They must know that he would kill the white man again, if he had a chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. A man kills such an enemy if he can" (102-103). Lawrence Evers affirms that the albino represents "the White Man, the White Man in the Indian, and the White Man in Abel himself" (qtd in Bartelt 40). In addition, Matthias Schubnell argues that Abel "shows all the symptoms of identity confusion: estrangement from both the tribal and the Anglo-American cultures, emotional disturbance in his relationships, and an inability to channel his aggression appropriately" (103).

Released after six years in prison, Abel is required to relocate to Los Angeles, where he is monitored by social workers hired by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help relocated Indians resolve problems with housing, education, and employment and to accelerate their cultural assimilation. Soon after getting settled in the city, he becomes more disoriented and he is confronted with the city's murderous artificiality and the Euro-American methods of impersonal bureaucratic structures. In Los Angeles where he meets other relocated Natives, Abel works as a stapler in a factory, but finds the impersonal intrusive methods of the state representatives lacking the genuine kin relations and he feels again lost and deracinated with no sense of meaningful identity. This intensifies his isolation and leads to his abusive drinking as an escape from his inner instability and his failure to cope with the pressures of a bicultural existence in the city. As a result, Abel fails to achieve real intimate relationship with Milly, one of the social workers who "believed in Honor, Industry, the Second Chance, the Brotherhood of Man, the American Dream, and him—Abel" (107). The Navajo Ben Benally, Abel's friend and roommate, reveals that Milly "used to bring a lot of questionnaires and read them to us, a lot of silly questions about education and health and the kind of work we were doing and all … I didn't care, but he [Abel] got mad about it and said it wasn't any of her business" (144). Ben tells about this wide gap between the two cultures, "They have a lot of *words*, and you know they mean something, but you don't know what, and your own words are no good because they're not the same; they're different, and they're the only words you've got" (158; italics in original). In this sense, Momaday attributes the sickness of Euro-American civilization that is imposed on Natives to the technological revolution and its technocratic environment that has rationalized human experience and has cut off humans from the natural world. He affirms, "One effect of the technological revolution has been to uproot us from the soil. We have become disoriented; we have suffered a kind of psychic dislocation of ourselves in time and space. We may be perfectly sure of where we are in relation to the supermarket and the next coffee break, but I doubt that any of us knows where he is in relation to the stars and to the solstices" (*The Man*, 47–48).

By stressing the importance of the connection between humans and the land, Momaday presents through Milly's father the difference between the Native American's relationship with the landscape and the non-Indian. Milly tells Abel about her father's fight against the earth: "*The earth where we lived was hard and dry and brick red, and Daddy plowed and planted and watered the land. . . . and at last began to hate the land, began to think of it as some kind of enemy, his own very personal and deadly enemy. I remember he came in from the fields at evening, having been beaten by the land, and he said nothing. He never said anything*" (108; emphasis in original). Echoing Abel's initial inability to speak that suggests his alienation from the land, Milly's father is also mute and cannot articulate any connection to the land that he

plants without love. So, by considering the land as enemy, Milly's father is figuratively landless and cannot be associated with any sense of home that identifies him.

It is through Reverend Tosamah, a Kiowa priest known as the Priest of the Sun, that Abel starts to restore his sense of identity and to recall the stories of his community embedded in the land. In his sermons which mix Christian and Kiowa spiritual traditions, Tosamah refers to the alienation brought on by the disconnection from the natural environment and how this disconnection has led to deadened speech that reproduces the artifices of the modern world:

> In the white man's world, language, too—and the way in which the white man thinks of it—has undergone a process of change … On every side of him there are words by the millions, an unending succession of pamphlets and papers, letters and books, bills and bulletins, commentaries and conversations. . . . He is sated and insensitive; his regard for language—for the Word itself—as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. (95)

Tosamah makes it clear that the language is made vital through a symbiotic relationship between the land and the people due to the power of the land on imagination; he says, "At the slightest elevation you can see to the end of the world. To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun" (127–28). Then Tosamah recalls the story of his grandmother for whom "words were medicine; they were magic and invisible. They came from nothing into sound and meaning. They were beyond price; they could neither be bought nor sold. And she never threw words away" (96). He also recounts, "My grandmother used to tell me the story of Tai-me, of how Tai-me came to the Kiowas. The Kiowas were a sun dance culture, and Tai-me was their sun dance doll, their most sacred fetish; no medicine was ever more powerful. There is a story about the coming of Tai-me" (96). This account underscores the power of the natural world in shaping human life and identity through language and the tradition of storytelling.

In the second sermon, Tosamah tells his own story and the story of the Kiowa migration from Montana to Oklahoma, pausing at Devils Tower and settling near Rainy Mountain. Each place throughout is made sacred and is endowed with self-defining narratives and legends that make them mythic locations vital to the personal and tribal identities. One of these monumental sites that evoke power and majesty is the Devils Tower, a huge scarred rock rising one thousand feet out of the earth, that engenders "an awful quiet in the heart of man" and around which narratives had been told. Tosamah recalls when he sees the Devils Tower, "It stands in motion, like certain timeless trees that aspire too much into the sky, and imposes an illusion on the land … Man must account for it. He must never fail to explain such a thing to himself, or else he is estranged forever from the universe. Two centuries ago, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock" (131). The legend that the Kiowas told of the rock's origin and power attests that the natural environment has power on imagination and inspires stories that connect humans to the natural place. In this sense, Tosamah evokes, "from that moment, and so long as the legend lives, the Kiowas have kinsmen in the night sky" (131) that save them from estrangement from the universe. Robert Nelson summarizes this Native cosmologic ideology as follows: "First, there is the land, made visible at sunrise, a beginning time. The human being is also there, to witness and, in so witnessing, to become a part of that landscape's (re-)animation. Only then is there the song, or the dance, or the story, or the ceremony that becomes the text of that vision, the *articulation* of that experience" (*Place and Vision* 121). Emphasizing the fusion of place and language in identifying self-identity which is expressed in the novel, Matthias Schubnell argues, "Momaday believes that the Indian relation to the world is based on the power of the word" (116), and this echoes Momaday's idea that "place is created where language touches land … Where language touches the earth, there is the holy, there is the sacred" (*The Man* 124).

Alongside Tosamah's sermons, Ben Benally plays a significant role in the process of Abel's healing and cultural revitalization; he prays for his friend on a Los Angeles mountaintop and tells him about the Navajo old ways and traditions. Ben sings to him the Navajo Night Chant "House made of dawn" and tells him about "the stories and the sings, Beautyway and Night Chant … [he] told him what they meant, what [he] thought they were about" (146). In spite of being drunk, Abel drifts in consciousness and becomes receptive, and thus the process of recovering from physical and spiritual malaise is set in motion. After being brutally beaten by a police officer, Abel quits his job and returns home again where he responds to his dying grandfather's appeals and begins to re-integrates the motion of life at Walatowa. Indeed, Francisco's "voice had failed each day, only to rise up again in the dawn. The old man had spoken six times in the dawn, and the voice of his memory was whole and clear and growing like the dawn" (197). On his deathbed, Francisco reminisces about his efforts to educate Abel during his childhood, outlining the conditions of being part of the natural world and integrating the landscape that is the source of their existence through time:

> *He took his grandsons out at first light to the old Campo Santo, south and west of the Middle. He made them [Abel and his brother Vidal] stand just there, above the point of the low white rock, facing east. They could see the black mesa looming on the first light, and he told them there was the house of the sun. They must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. They must know it as they knew the shape of their hands, always and by heart. The sun rose up on the black mesa at a different place each day. It began there, at a point on the central slope, standing still for the solstice, and ranged all the days southward across the rise and fall of the long plateau, drawing closer by the measure of mornings and moons to the lee, and back again. They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time*. (173; italics in original)

Francisco's teaching reveals a way of life based on subordination to and interaction with the natural world in a balanced universe animated by ritual performances and storytelling.

Reckoning this wisdom, Abel comes finally to accept and embrace the earth medicine and the sky medicine, symbolized respectively by the eagle and the rattlesnake which are manifestations of the life of the land and which imply that humans hold and are held by the land. The eagle is associated in Jemez culture with vision and power that possesses and dominates the land. Abel's awareness of this fact is made clear through his participation in the Eagle Watchers Society and his childhood experience of watching the eagles' dominance over the snake in the sky above the Valle Grande when two eagles carry a snake and rise in the sky and then "let go of the snake," which falls "slowly, writhing and rolling, floating out like a bit of silver thread against the wide backdrop of the land" (18). Abel considers the eagle the "right eye of the earth" (16) as "the eagle ranges far and wide over the land, farther than any other creature, and all things there are related simply by having existence in the perfect vision of a bird" (57). Thus, Abel qualifies the vision of eagles as "an awful, holy sight, full of magic and meaning" (15). By contrast, the snake is linked to the earth and represents the force of rootedness and the power of tradition and myth, which implies being possessed by the land rather than dominating it. Abel's spiritual sickness and alienation which predate his participation in the war result from "his unwillingness to be held by the land, that is, his resistance to the snake spirit of the place" (Nelson, Snake and Eagle 48). Therefore, his recovery depends on integrating both spiritual forces as symbolized in the novel's closing scene when he is finally able to participate in a tribal ceremony called the Dawn race. Abel's healing is confirmed by surrendering to the forces of the land as innately whole and indivisible; he runs and "the running itself and the land and the dawn appearing. The sun rose up in the saddle and shone in shafts upon the road across the snow-covered valley and the hills" (211). Abel's renewed vision of the land takes shape at sunrise when "he could see at last without having to think. He could see the canyon and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the river and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn" (212). At this moment, Abel recalls in his mind "the words of a song," the words of Benally's Navajo Night Chant, that celebrate the land, the source of all forms of life, "*House made of pollen, house made of dawn*" (212). The closing words of the song, "In beauty it is finished" (147), signal the completion of Abel's spiritual healing and his renewed vision that confirm his own identity with the natural order. Even as Abel recalls the words of the song, they are not uttered; "there was no sound, and he had no voice" that can supplant the authority of the landscape. Abel's inability to speak echoes Benally's experience of restoring his identity with the Navajo landscape: "*at first light you went out and knew where you were. . . . And you were there where you wanted to be, and alone. You didn't want to see anyone, or hear anyone speak. There was nothing to say*" (170). In an interview with Joseph Bruchac, Momaday clarifies this power of the land and the Native's sense of belonging to it: "The Indians of the South west, and the Pueblo people, for example, and the Navajos with whom I grew up, they don't live on the land; they live in it, in a real sense. And that is very important to me, and I like to evoke as best I can that sense of belonging to the earth" (qtd in Nelson, Snake and Eagle 14). The novel's final word "Qtsedaba," which echoes the first word of the novel "Dypaloh," signals the end of the story in the Jemez oral tradition and reinforces the importance of storytelling in preserving the Native cultural identity embedded in the landscape.

### 3.2. The Land, Memory, and Cultural Identity in *Mornings in Jenin*

*Mornings* is a novel that fuses fiction, history, and political issues and covers the major events in the contemporary Palestinian history since the catastrophe (Nakba) in 1984 and their effects on Palestinians' lives. Through its omniscient narrator and centring on its protagonist Amal, the novel vividly depicts the traumatic experience of exile and dislocation, the feeling of rootlessness, and the ongoing struggle of Palestinians to affirm their indigenous identity and to resist the Israeli colonial power. Abulhawa mixes in her novel narratives of different human conditions based on fragmented memories of the homeland and informed by nostalgia to conceptualize and restore the disrupted Palestinian identity. To this end, she immerses in the rich cultural repertoire of Palestine with its traditions, customs, rituals of everyday life, and stories that are tied to the land on which Palestinians lived for centuries and developed their selfhood.

In a similar way to Momaday's novel and after a prelude in which Susan Abulhawa introduces Amal facing an Israeli soldier with his gun on her forehead in Jenin in 2002, "the petitions of memory pulled her back, and still back, to a home she had never known" (xiii). So, the novel opens with a description of the past days of the pre-Nakba era when Palestinian families in Ein Hod village used to live a stable and peaceful life on their native land. Before the Israeli occupation, the village of Ein Hod is described as the utopian and idyllic place with a traditional culture and lifestyle where the harmonious kinship relations between individuals and their attachment to their native land are very strong. Therefore, Abulhawa provides descriptions of the countryside, the fruits, and the produce of the land that have vital presences in the novel as those of the human characters. In an interview with Liana Badr, Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish asserts, "I am disconcerted by the absence of the place, of its veritable attributes, in a poetry that pretends to celebrate it. I don't find in Palestinian poetry the flora and fauna, the landscape, in other words the real Palestine" (qtd. in Khamis and Rahman 4). So, Abulhawa's novel has come to fill this gap and to voice the sacred relation of Palestinians to their land and to reclaim their cultural and national identity based on this relation. Moreover, the narrative presents alongside a cultural archive of Palestinians that involves customs, celebrations, music, clothes, rituals, streets, and cities with their original Arabic names, highlighting their historical existence and their connectedness to the land of Palestine. It is through these details that Palestinian identity that flourished through hundreds of years is reclaimed; indeed, as the narrator maintains, "[a]ttachment to God, land, and family was the core of [the Palestinians'] being and that is what they defended and sought to keep" (*Mornings* 28).

Those descriptions of the landscape and the strong attachment to the land are shown through Yehya Abulheja, the patriarch of the family, who did not allow his son Hasan to pursue his education because, as Yehya tells him, "[b]ooks

will do nothing but come between you and the land" (10). Yehya who represents the generation before 'El Nakba' embodies the trauma of dispossession and forced expulsion as the narrator puts it:

> Yehya tallied forty generations of living, now stolen. Forty generations of childbirth and funerals, weddings and dance, prayer and scraped knees … Forty generations with their imprinted memories, secrets, and scandals. All carried away by the notion of entitlement of another people, who would settle in the vacancy and proclaim it all. (35)

Yehya's life in the refugee camp of Jenin is tormenting, leading him to immerse in his own memories of old times that bring him comfort and a nostalgic desire to go back to his native village. In the fields surrounding the village, Yehya would touch his olive trees to "resurrect simplicity and peace" (17), and "[e]very November, the harvest week brought renewed vigor to Ein Hod, and Yehya, Abu Hasan, could feel it in his bones" (3). Dwelling in his memories, Yehya reminisces about the harvest period which is the occasion on which the cultural practices of Palestinian families rooted in history are displayed: "[a]s the dark sky gave way to light, the sounds of reaping that noble fruit rose from the sun-bleached hills of Palestine … As they toiled, women sang the ballads of centuries past and small children played and were chided by their mothers when they got in the way (4).

Living now as a refugee who has lost his land and being unable to endure the pain of rootlessness, Yehya returns secretly to his village proclaiming, "[t]hat terrain is in my blood! I know every tree and every bird. The soldiers do not" (44). During his stay, "he had roamed his fields, greeting his carob and fig trees with the excitement of a man reuniting with his family" (44), and when he comes back from "the paradise of realized nostalgia" (44), he brings with him the fruits and olives of the land he loves. Yehya's family enjoys eating the fruits that represent the symbol of their sacred land, "[t]hey divvied the goods and ate them with ceremonial savor, letting the olives roll in a dance with their tongues before taking the sacrament. Those fruits of forty generations of toil went down like the elixir of Palestine, like the nectar of her centuries" (45). While Yehya's visit to his village fulfils his strong nostalgic desire to embrace his land and feel it, it also arises in him heart-breaking feelings of loss and pain induced by the state of the village and the land after the Israeli occupation. The narration reveals:

> The big oak that had grown out of nowhere in the late 18oos was still there. "Well, of course it's there." All the olives were still there, too, but they were in need of care from people who knew how to care for them. "Those people don't know a damn thing about olives. They're lily-skinned foreigners with no attachment to the land. If they had a sense of the land then the land would compel in them a love for the olives". (46)

So, the olive trees mean for Yehya belonging and rootedness, and this leads him to visit the village for the second time and it is the last time he sees his homeland. Yehya is killed and before his burial, the family "found three olives in his hand and some figs in his pockets … from their tears, the people of Jenin's shanty camp mourned Yehya's death with a celebration of his life and his final bravery and love of the land" (48). The death of Yehya Abulheja can be interpreted as a sign of the loss of the land itself and the unbearable trauma of being expelled from it. In the same manner as Momaday's Abel who faces the trauma of dislocation and spiritual malaise in the reservation due to the continuous governmental policies of usurping and controlling Native land and eradicating indigenous identity, Yehya suffers dislocation and uprootedness in the refugee camp inside his own country, and his attempt to keep himself attached to his land leads to his demise. In spite of his death, Yehya's valour, his steadfastness, and his unwavering love for the homeland are transmitted to his descendants whose nostalgia and desire to return to the land of their ancestors becomes the only solace.

In parallel to Abel's alienation in Los Angeles, Yehya's granddaughter Amal, the central character of the novel representing the third generation of Abulheja family, endures the sickness of alienation and homelessness in her exilic experience both in occupied Palestine and in the United States like all Palestinians who have been forced to disperse worldwide. Amal has never visited her ancestors' land, but she has gathered stories about its beauties and richness from her father Hasan who instilled in her the love of the homeland and its cultural heritage that have become an inextricable part of her identity. She declares, "I conjured all the places of the home that had been built up in my young mind, one tree, one rosebush, one story at a time. I thought of the water and sandy beaches of the Mediterranean – 'The Bride of Palestine,' Baba called it – which I had visited only in my dreams" (64). In fact, it was her father who taught her the significance of the strong bond between Palestinian people and their native land. Hasan told her, the land "belongs to you, as you can belong to it. We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return. When we die, we return to the land. In a way, she owns us. Palestine owns us and we belong to her" (62). In illustrating this connectedness, Hasan provides a metaphor that represents the land of Palestine which is called "Old Lady," a fifteen-hundred-year-old olive tree that connotes the deep rootedness and belonging of Palestinian people to their lost homeland. Amal remembers her father's words, "Baba once told me that no one owned Old Lady. This old girl was here long before any of us, and she'll be here long after we're gone" (62). This metaphoric image of Palestine through the olive tree indicates the deeply rooted identity of Palestinians in the native territory and their historical rights to their land, and as Helena Schulz and Juliane Hammer assert, "One particular feature of the symbolic use of nature is the tree, often used as a symbol of rootedness, as in the Swedish fir and birch, the Lebanese cedar or the Palestinian olive tree. Metaphors of people being rooted in the land are a powerful means through which to claim historical rights" (15).

In the same context, Amal recalls memories of her father reading to her every morning on the balcony in Jenin classical Arabic poems that express the intense love of Palestine, Palestinians' mourning for the loss of their homeland, and nostalgia for the old happy days. Although the young Amal finds difficulty in understanding classical Arabic, she feels excited to "once again have a special place in Baba's morning"; she finds the words magical, "the cadence was mesmerizing, and Baba's voice was a lullaby" (58). The reminisces pull her back to these old days:

> My life before the war returns to me now in memories bracketed by Baba's arms and scented with the tobacco of his olive-wood pipe … my childhood was magical, enchanted by poetry and the dawn, … Through them, I felt my father's passions, his losses, his heartaches, and his loves. He passed all of that to me … And decades later, the words of Gibran's haunting rhythms and the memory of Baba's soft baritone would be my only thread of solace. (60-61)

For Amal, her father's mornings have become part of her daily experience of identifying with the place and realizing the strong ties between people and their homeland, contributing later to developing her sense of belonging and identity. However, during the Six-Day War of 1967, Amal experiences the atrocities committed by the Israeli soldiers who "had bombed and burned, killed and maimed, plundered and looted. Now they had come to claim the land" (71). After this new tragedy, Amal begins her journey of dislocation and homelessness from Jenin to the orphanage, to the United States, to Lebanon, and to Jenin again in a similar trajectory to that of Abel in his struggle for self-identification and search for belonging. Amal's first experience of the painful feeling of alienation and homelessness was when she lost her parents and her brother Yousef joined the armed resistance. She was sent to an orphanage in Jerusalem where she began to develop her sense of belonging, and in spite of the hard times she faced with other girls in the orphanage, she later proudly affirms, "Our bond was Palestine. It was a language we dismantled to construct a home" (165).

Once in the United States after being granted a scholarship, Amal experiences the exilic life with its psychological effects of estrangement and cultural displacement; she "felt diminished, out of place, and eager to belong" (172). In fact, the feeling of El Ghurba and the xenophobia she faces in America make her suffering stronger; she describes her situation, "I floundered in that open-ended world, trying to fit in. But my foreignness showed in my brown skin and accent. Statelessness clung to me like bad perfume and the airplane hijackings of the seventies trailed my Arabic surname" (169). Therefore, in her attempt to adapt to the new life and culture and to escape the horrific memories of military violence, colonial oppression, and suffering, she immerses herself in the western mode of life that offers her the illusion of safety and joy. She reflects in her exilic 'home,' "For the first time I lived without threats and the sediments of war. I lived free of soldiers, free of inherited dreams and martyrs tugging at my hands" (173). Amal begins by changing her name to '*Amy*,' "Amal of the steadfast refugees and tragic beginnings was now Amy in the land of privilege and plenitude" (179). Amal which means 'hope' in plural in Arabic becomes "without the hope. I was a word drained of its meaning. A woman emptied of her past" (178). So, her anglicised name evokes the suppression of her Palestinian identity and leaving behind the cultural heritage and the history of her homeland. Amal's endeavours to assimilate in the new culture and lifestyle are not without a price as she finds herself suffering more with the burden of alienation and hyphenated identity; she "metamorphosed into an unclassified Arab-Western hybrid, unrooted and unknown. I drank alcohol and dated several men…I spun in cultural vicissitude, wandering in and out of the American ethos until I lost my way" (173). In her wandering, Amal cannot avoid the ghost of history and she is subsequently brought "face-to-face with the past" (173) through memories of the homeland that "had much of the stuff that warmed our souls" (164). Like Abel's awakening after Tosamah's sermons and Benally's ritualistic prayers, Amal's consciousness is informed by the haunting memories of her childhood in Jenin, of her family and community, and the stories of her father that trigger her nostalgia and urge her to seek wholeness by identifying with her ancestors' land. She eventually acknowledges:

> The divide could not have been greater, nor could it be bridged. That's how it was. Palestine would just rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced. In class, at a bar, strolling through the city. Without warning, the weeping willows of Rittenhouse Square would turn into Jenin's fig trees reaching down to offer me the fruit. It was a persistent pull, living in the cells of my body, calling me to myself. (175)

In a distant place and with a reversal of consciousness, Amal cannot push away the invading thoughts that she belongs to the land of Palestine and to the people who were expelled from their land and forced into exile. She realizes that she cannot bury her past and her memories, avowing that "no matter what façade I bought, I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of the banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world" (179).

After receiving a call from her brother Yousef, Amal travels to Lebanon where she comes to realize the intense feeling of yearning for the homeland and the nostalgia for a life she dreams to reconstruct with her community in Palestine. In the refugee camp of Sabra and Shatila, Amal's marriage to Majid, her brother's friend, reinforces her sense belonging and brings her hope again for a better future. However, her dream is shattered by the Israeli invasion of Sabra and Shatila in 1982, which results in the death of her beloved relatives in the camp when she is waiting for her husband in the United States. After her second experience of exile in America where she gives birth to her daughter Sara, Amal finally returns to Jenin driven by the same longing for the homeland that holds her bittersweet memories and that symbolizes her rootedness and her sense of being. Amal brings her sixteen-year-old daughter, who represents the fourth generation of the family, to the land of her ancestors and makes her learn about the history of Palestine and the stories and myths of Palestinians. She takes her to visit the Mount of Olives which overlooks Jerusalem and notices the changes in the landscape due to the Israeli attempts to obliterate all forms of Palestinian existence; she bitterly says,

> Now that ancient village with walls made of secrets and trees planted in blood looked inanimate. Around Jerusalem and in the West Bank, settlements on every hilltop—with their manicured green lawns and red roofs metastasizing into the valleys like an earth rash—contrasted cruelly with the crumbling Arab homes below, where sewage from these settlements drained and where settlers often dumped their garbage. (290)

Then Amal shows Sara the "olive tree in Jenin—Old Lady that has more history than the Old City walls. It's more beautiful, humble, and authentic than the chiseled stone here" (290), illustrating the embedded souls of Palestinians in

the land. In this final journey, Amal transmits the sense of homeland and the attachment of Palestinians to their land to her daughter. Thus, after being shot in the massacre of Jenin in 2002, Sara carries the Palestinian cause and engages in the struggle of Palestinians who transfer their memories and the same stories to generations to come. Indeed, they have "a single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one's humanity, of being dumped like rubbish into refugee camps unfit for rats. Of being left without rights, home, or nation" (78). So, throughout Abulhawa's narrative, the details of the place intermingled with historical events, personal memories, and collective stories affirm the long historical existence of Palestinians on their land and maintain their indigenous identity that can never be annihilated by colonial settlement and military force. Like Abel's celebration of his community's cultural belief system and traditional values, Amal's narration of Palestinian transgenerational stories and memories illustrate the power of the land in keeping alive Palestinians' cultural heritage and maintaining their indigenous identity.

### 3.3. The Land as Symbol of Resistance and Sovereignty

Despite their different cultural and historical contexts, Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* share a deep reverence for the land as a source of belonging and a site of resistance against displacement and erasure. Both stories are grounded in the political histories of their nations, illustrating the role of settler colonialism and the oppressive policies of subjugation and control in generating traumas and psychic troubles for indigenous peoples. The only means of healing the wounds of alienation, displacement, and cultural erasure is resistance by affirming the indigenous cultural identity through stories, traditions, and rituals that are inspired by the land. Set during the period of termination and relocation programme that was meant to erase Indian country and to move Native Americans to cities where they would disappear through assimilation, Momaday's novel, like all works of the Native American Renaissance, is situated at the intersection of culture and politics. It is concerned with the condition of tribally enrolled Indians who, despite being granted American citizenship by an act of Congress in 1924, remain citizens of colonized tribes living in reservations and subject to governmental control. Therefore, the novel offers a critique of the Euro-American world and its civilisation that has caused Abel's alienation and sickness of the soul, and it traces his struggle and his journey of resistance through cultural regeneration and attachment to the land.

Abel, who returns to his tribe and reintegrates the traditional life of his community, represents Indian resistance to Western culture and dominance, and the first act he commits after his war experience is his killing of an Indian albino who is referred to in the novel as "the white man." Abel's killing of the white man who is believed to be an evil spirit, a witch, suggests the destruction of the evil Euro-American legacy as well as the annihilation of the white disturbing part of himself that white America attempts to maintain in Native people. During Abel's trial, Father Olguin, the Catholic priest of Jemez, makes a point by noting the different contexts of Jemez culture and Western law concerning the nature of the crime; he argues, "We are dealing with a psychology about which we know very little … I believe that this man was moved to do what he did by an act of the imagination so compelling as to be inconceivable to us" (101-102). He even refuses the designation of the crime by the term "homicide" which he considers "a legal term, but the law is not my context; and certainly it isn't his" (102). And as an act of resistance to the western law, Abel "refused to speak . . . for he should not have known what more to say. Word by word by word these men were disposing of him in language, their language, and they were making a bad job of it" (102). In spite of his incarceration, Abel does not surrender to the white man's world and carries the burden of alienation throughout the narrative to find solace only in Walatowa and in the culture of his people.

In Los Angeles, Abel finds himself adrift with other Indians relocated from their reservation communities. And in spite of their dual status and the power of western civilisation and its technological means, Abel, Tosamah, and Benally maintain their cultural identity and they ultimately go back home empowered by their inherited cultural practices rooted in their lands of the American West. Nicholas Monk writes about this part of the country, the Indian homeland, "The West is a region in which Native Americans have clung to established cultural practices and have achieved a measure of geographical and temporal continuity. The West has also been a notable location for the struggle between Western, or Eurocentric, capitalist modernity and its 'other' over centuries" (138). In this respect, Momaday's novel treats the Indian land as alive and resistant with its culture that perdures and faces the attempts of eradication and the impositions of a second civilization. In spite of the adoption of certain features of the colonists' culture, Momaday depicts the Pueblo people' tenacious hold on their cultural practices against the different invaders of their ancestral land as follows:

> The people of the town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were a long time in conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make their living from the things that are and have always been within their reach … They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting. (58)

By using a 'foreign' language and a non-oral means of narrating the Indian way of life, Momaday's novel can be considered a creative response of resistance that seeks to affirm the strength and continuance of Indian traditional life and the Indians' tenure in the land. Simon Ortiz argues about the question of language and Indian resistance, "it is entirely possible for a people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language … it is the way that Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization. And this response has been one of resistance; there is no clearer word for it than resistance" (10).

This ability to survive historical changes while preserving ancestral heritage is mostly manifest in Abel's grandfather Francisco who represents the long-standing resistance to colonial dominance in the Pueblo community. Francisco is a Catholic sacristan who maintains Jemez religious traditions within the Christian faith as a form of indigenization of the western religion. The religious ceremonies and rituals he practices for his people combine cultural elements inspired by the natural world and tied to the land. Among these festivities, Francisco describes the fiesta of "Our Lady of the Angels" in which "the Medicine men presided over the little horse with prayers and plumes, pollen and meal" (79) and the ritual of the "Sun Dance" that glorifies the sun as a powerful spirit force, "it have the certain character of a god … When the Kiowas came to the land of the Crows, they could see the dark lees of the hills at dawn across the Bighorn River, the profusion of light on the grain shelves, the oldest deity ranging after the solstices" (130). When Francisco was young, he was accused of being evil by the predecessor of Father Olguin in a letter published in a journal in the 1870s in which he said, "He is evil … He is one of them & goes often in the kiva & puts on their horns and hides & does worship that Serpent which even is the One our most ancient enemy" (51). The worship of the 'Serpent' was viewed as a Devil worship at a time when European religious missionaries and priests sought to suppress the native religion and eradicate its beliefs. However, the 'Serpent' in the Indian religion is considered a natural symbol of the power and spirit of the land that implies rootedness and being held by the earth, and for this reason, Francisco and his community firmly withstand those attempts of erasure and refuse abandoning their old religious beliefs and practices. Although the religion of the Jemez Pueblo in the period that Momaday depicts -1940s and 1950s - is a blend of the Kachina Cult of the Pueblos and Catholicism, the novel reflects the strong revival of traditional tribal beliefs informed by the Native American Renaissance and nationalist considerations that seek to recover tribal sovereignty. In this context, the Lakota writer and philosopher Vine Deloria reports, "On the reservations we are seeing amazing resiliency in restoring the old ceremonies. A massive shift in allegiance is occurring in most tribes away from Christianity and secularism and back towards the traditional ways. A surprisingly high percentage of Native American clergy are also doing traditional ceremonies and urban area churches are often the scene of traditional healing ceremonies" (254).

Stressing the question of resistance and sovereignty, Momaday provides a vivid image of the land *in* which Natives had lived for centuries and describes some of the animals that inhabit the Jemez valley, "Higher, among the hills and mesas and sandstone cliffs, there are foxes, and bobcats and mountain lions . . . the lizard and the frog … They are sacred" (56-57). These wild animals, in addition to hawks, eagles, and rattlesnakes, "have tenure in the land" and "man, too, has tenure in the land" (57). In contrast, "latecoming things—the beasts of burden and of trade, the horse and the sheep, the dog and the cat—these have an alien and inferior aspect … they are estranged from the wild land, and made tentative. They are born and die upon the land, but then they are gone away from it as if they had never been … their cries have no echo in the rain and the river (57). This stark contrast between the two categories of animals alludes to the difference between Natives and the late coming white man, the colonizer, who lacks tenure in the land and whose presence on a foreign land causes his estrangement and uprootedness. Because of this tenure in the land, Momaday expresses the right of Natives to recover a lost sovereignty over their land in an explicitly political passage:

> Man came down the ladder to the plain a long time ago … There are low, broken walls on the tabletops and smoke-blackened caves in the cliffs, where still there are metates and broken bowls and ancient cars of corn, as if the prehistoric civilization had gone out among the hills for a little while and would return; and then everything would be restored to an older age, and time would have returned upon itself and a bad dream of invasion and change would have been dissolved in an hour before the dawn. For man, too, has tenure in the land; he dwelt upon the land twenty-five thousand years ago, and his gods before him. (57-58)

In fact, this concern makes *House made of Dawn* a revolutionary and nationalist work that seeks cultural regeneration and rebirth and expresses Indian rightful authority over the ancestral land through narratives. In the words of Arnold Krupat and Michael Elliott, Momaday's "eclectic, indigenist position could be made consistent with the nationalist's acute concern for tribal sovereignty … For Momaday the relation of people to stories and of stories to land is a form of resistance to Western colonialism" (132). So through his narrative, Momaday emphasizes the power of storytelling as a mode of resilience, resistance, and of ending the "bad dream" of colonialism.

In addition, the title of the novel, which is drawn from the opening line of a traditional Navajo prayer known as the Night Chant and used in healing ceremonies, is used as a symbol of rebirth, spiritual healing, hope, and new beginning. The novel opens with the evocative statement: "There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting" (1). This imagery refers to harmony in the natural world, sacredness of the land, and the start of a new day after the night's darkness. Thus, it reinforces the grounding of Indian identity in the natural environment and suggestes the Indian people's hope and right of self-determination as the ending lines of the novel illustrate: "He could see the dark hills at dawn. He was running, and under his breath he began to sing … And he went running on the rise of the song. *House made of pollen, house made of dawn*" (212; Momaday's emphasis). In spite of the fact that Native Americans belong to diverse tribal and cultural backgrounds and their identity still raises the question of 'mixed-blood' and 'full-blood,' which is one of the consequences of colonialism, they share a collective consciousness and desire of restoring a centred sense of identity and recovering a lost sovereignty over their lands. In this sense, Drew Lopenzina affirms, "Native peoples are still here on 'Turtle Island' (the name many indigenous people give to the North American continent). They are still claiming their traditional identities, still claiming sovereign title to their lands, still holding onto their spiritual traditions, and, perhaps most importantly, they are still telling their stories" (24).

In a similar way, Palestinians have responded to the legacies and practices of colonialism in different ways as Abulhawa depicts in her novel *Mornings in Jenin*. The novel came actually to fill a gap in Palestinian literature which is

particularly absent on the international scene and it has contributed in representing the Palestinian cause through historical records, cultural memories, and political struggle. Resistance to colonial legacy and affirmation of indigenous identity start by self-representation as advocated by Edward Said:

> What we must again see is the issue involving *representation*, an issue always lurking near the question of Palestine. Zionism always undertakes to speak for Palestine and the Palestinians; this has always meant a blocking operation, by which the Palestinian cannot be heard from (or represent himself) directly on the world stage. Just as the expert Orientalist believed that only he could speak (paternally as it were) for the natives and primitive societies that he had studied— his *presence* denoting their *absence*. (39, *The Question of Palestine*)

Abulhawa acknowledges Said's influence in this endeavour by stating in the "Author's Note" at the end of the novel, "Edward Said influenced the making of this book in no small way. He lamented once that the Palestinian narrative was lacking in literature, and I incorporated his disappointment into my resolve" (325). As a historical novel, the work records and documents the key tragic events in contemporary Palestinian history intermingled with political insights, journalistic details, and personal and communal experiences which have all connection with the land of Palestine. Abulhawa wrote in her end note, "Although the characters in this book are fictitious, Palestine is not, nor are the historical events and figures in this story" (323). Therefore, the backdrop of the novel with which the narrative begins is Jenin's massacre in 2002 which resulted in mass killing, the burying of civilians alive, and the demolishing and burning of homes, and it is in this massacre that Amal is killed while saving her daughter. Susan Abulhawa travelled to Jenin a year later and she wrote in her note, "I heard reports that a massacre was taking place in that refugee camp, which had been sealed off to the world, including reporters and aid workers, as a closed military zone. The horrors I witnessed there gave me the urgency to tell this story. The steadfastness, courage, and humanity of the people of Jenin were my inspiration" (324).

So *Mornings* is an example of resistance literature that narrates the brutal occupation of Palestinian land and the barbaric massacres committed against Palestinian people; it is an attempt to correct Palestinian history that has been distorted and misrepresented in Israeli literature and in Western discourse and media. In this sense, Abulhawa's novel represents the voice of Palestinians (the subaltern) that seeks to establish and to expose to the world the truth about Palestinians' defence of their land and to counter the Western misinterpretation of Palestinian resistance as terrorism. Accordingly, the novel depicts with details and figures the events of El Nakba, El Naksa, and the massacres of Sabra and Shatila and finally of Jenin, exposing the nature of Israeli settler colonialism and the barbarism and cruelty of Israeli settlers who stole the Palestinian land and drove millions of people to exile with everlasting consequences of uprootedness, dislocation, and identity crisis. The novel begins with the tragic dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948 which evokes the traumatic experience of loss and dispersal: "In the sorrow of a history buried alive, the year 1948 in Palestine fell from the calendar into exile, ceasing to reckon the marching count of days, months, and years, instead becoming an infinite mist of one moment in history" (35). The author reveals that the Israelis who proclaimed themselves "Freedom Fighters, Soldiers of God … set about getting rid of the non-Jewish population through massacres, terror, and expulsion" (25).

After Yehya's death in his last visit to Jenin, Palestinian refugees in the camp come to realize the new reality of their existence stripped of the hope of regaining their lost homeland:

> Yehya's death unveiled a truth that seized the night and made it heave with restlessness. How was it that a man could not walk onto his own property, visit the grave of his wife, eat the fruits of forty generations of his ancestors' toil, without mortal consequence? Somehow that raw question had not previously penetrated the consciousness of the refugees who had become confused in the rank eternity of waiting, pining at abstract international resolutions, resistance, and struggle. (48)

To expose the Israeli massacres that continued over the following decades, the novel provides heinous pictures of the war crimes committed against the Palestinian civilians with the total silence and passive watching, sometimes with connivance, of the world's most powerful countries and international organizations. For example, in the Sabra and Shatila massacre, Amal saw in newspapers the picture showing to the world the tearing of her brother's wife's unborn baby from her womb: "Someone had slit open the woman's stomach, cutting sideways and then upwards, perhaps trying to kill her unborn child" (178). And after the attack on Jenin in 2002, Sara wrote to her deceased mother about Haj Salem, the old storyteller of Jenin, who is killed in his home, "He was over one hundred years old, Mother. To have lived so long, only to be crushed to death by a bulldozer. Is this what it means to be Palestinian?" (314). Stoically, a week after the massacre, "*Newsweek* magazine determined that the most important story of the previous seven days had been the death of Princess Grace" (230), and as a sign of unconditional support of the United States to the Jewish state, President George W. Bush referred to Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon as a 'man of peace" (231).

Centred on the land as the source and symbol of indigenous identity and national belonging, Palestinian anticolonial resistance in Abulhawa's novel takes the form of political activism, armed struggle, and cultural resistance. In *Mornings*, almost all of the Palestinian characters are nationalists who share the same consciousness and dream of returning to their homes and regaining sovereignty over their ancestral land. After being evicted from his land, Amal's grandfather Yehya cannot overcome the pain of living as a refugee, and driven by the tormenting memories of idyllic times in his homeland, he returns to his village secretly despite the threat of death. His brave expedition illustrates his unshakable love of the land that permeates his mind and soul and his resistance to being extirpated from it. Nostalgia for the land of Palestine and the desire to return home is shared by Yehya's grandson Yousef and later by Amal in spite of her alienating experience in exile. The novel clearly states: "Toughness found fertile soil in the hearts of Palestinians, and the grains of resistance embedded themselves in their skin. Endurance evolved as a hallmark of refugee society … They learned to celebrate

martyrdom. Only martyrdom offered freedom. … Martyrdom became the ultimate defiance of Israeli occupation (108). Thus, Amal's brother Yousef and her husband Majid have become *Fedayeen* (revolutionaries) who have joined Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and settled in Lebanon in the 1970s. Yousef typifies many of the younger Palestinians whose memories of their forefathers telling stories of pre-occupied Palestine have ignited their desire to carry on their political and armed struggles. Yousef writes to his sister before his final departure, "They've taken everything, Amal, And still they take more … If I am martyred, then so be it … as all martyrs who die fighting for justice, freedom, and the land … It is unbearable to think of our future as nullified, condemned to an eternal refugee's life of subjugation and shackles. The resistance is forming and eventually we will take back what is rightfully ours" (120). Likewise, Majid writes to Amal before their marriage, "I have given my life to the resistance and sworn many an oath to the struggle" (201). Amal returns from the USA and joins her brother in the refugee camp in Lebanon where she finds a job as a teacher to help the refugee community. Her return demonstrates that even though the Palestinian diaspora lives in places far away from the homeland with painful feelings of estrangement and rootlessness, nostalgia and the collective memories of a lost country constitute a motivating factor that fuels their dedication to resistance to regain a sovereign territory of their own. In 1987 and as a response to colonial subjugation and oppression, the first *Intifada* broke out led by the boys of stones. It was "a spontaneous combustion after twenty years of Israeli occupation. It was a shaking off of oppression and it spread through the hearts of Palestinians everywhere" (249). The events of the uprising that "climbed from the ground to Palestinian hands, and the rocks they threw cracked the morbid glory of imperial victory" (249) demonstrate to the whole world that the Palestinian youth will continue the struggle of their ancestors and that their revolt constitutes a source of pride that reinforces and sustains their national identity.

On the other hand, Abulhawa uses narrative memory as a strategy of cultural resistance against Israeli attempts to eradicate Palestinian identity and to obliterate all evidence of Palestinian cultural heritage deeply rooted in the historical land of Palestine. As a novel of memory and remembering, *Mornings* brings back personal and community stories that have developed and flourished through centuries of communion with the land and that record the rich repertoire of Palestinian culture. Almost every Palestinian character in the novel engages in the process of memory recollection that glorifies the customs, traditions, and language of Palestinians and the rituals and ceremonies practiced at various occasions such as marriages and the harvest seasons. It is through this narration that Palestinians express their identity and their connectedness to the land and counter the colonial discourse that tends to construct a national belonging to the land of Palestine through archaeological excavations and the alleged divine right. Bilal Salameh avows that neither time nor generational change do shift the significance of land for Palestinians as long as the relationship between what he sees as "the holy trinity" (land, history, and memory) is not loosened (93). As a symbol of resistance and attachment to the land, the olive tree, represented in the novel by Old Lady, holds for Palestinians deep spiritual and emotional significance; "the villager viewed its fertility as a symbol of prosperity and good fortune. These trees often lived for hundreds of years, their fruits sustaining generations of the same family," and this justifies the adoption of the olive tree as a strong symbol of Palestinian nationalism and anticolonial resistance. Resistance is also expressed in the transfer of this cultural heritage to future generations to keep alive the Palestinian identity as Yehya and Hasan did with their children and as Amal does with her daughter Sara. Amal brings Sara to Jenin to learn about the history and culture of her land and people and to carry on the Palestinian struggle for freedom and sovereignty: "The old folks of Ein Hod would die refugees in the camp, bequeathing to their heirs the large iron keys to their ancestral homes, the crumbling land registers … their memories and love of the land, and the dauntless will not to leave the spirit of forty generations trapped beneath the subversion of thieves" (35). Moreover, in telling these Palestinian stories, the author introduces the different habits, food, celebrations, music, clothes, and rituals with their Arabic names such as *Baba*, *Bismillah*, *Salam alaykom*, *Dabke*, *Dal'Ouna*, *Egal*, *Fellaheen*, *Haj*, *Kaffiyeh*, *Knafe*, *Makloobeh*, *Nye*, *Oud*, *Wudu*, and *Salat*. Abulhawa provides a glossary at the end of the novel, explaining the meaning of each word and expression, and through this strategy she has succeeded in reinforcing the rootedness of Palestinians in the Arab culture and their belonging to a geographic territory they long for to reconstruct their nation state.

Related to memory and nostalgia, the title of the novel is notably symbolic, evoking more than a place or a time. 'Mornings,' like 'dawn' in Momaday's novel, represent renewal, regeneration, and hope. These mornings are associated with Jenin in a past time when Amal used to listen to her father telling stories and reading poetry that have inculcated in her national feelings of belonging and made her feel safety and peace in her father's protection. In her exilic life in the US, recalling the memories of these mornings has become her "only thread of solace" (61). She refers nostalgically to these moments she spent with her father, "I have never known a place as safe as his embrace … I have never known a more tender time than the dawn, coming with the smell of honey apple tobacco" (61). She also reveals that she "lived through the day in anticipation of night, the darkness just before dawn, hoping to once again have a special place in Baba's morning" (58). Thus, the novel's title stands for the enduring hope of return to a free Palestine and to the safety of an embracing land as Amal metaphorically declares, "All I wanted was to see Baba. Nothing else mattered. Nothing less would heal my wound but to lie in the safety of his embrace" (82). In the face of displacement and homelessness, Amal's recalling of these personal memories represents an act of resilience and resistance against forgetfulness and a symbol of the powerful assertion of presence and of the right to self-determination.

### 3.4. The Intersection between Native American and Palestinian Struggles

Intersecting on many levels, Momaday's and Abulhawa's novels belong to contemporary literature produced by indigenous writers that emphasizes the importance of storytelling, memory, and tradition in sustaining cultural identity, healing generational wounds, and maintaining the hope of regaining a lost sovereignty over the stolen ancestral land. The act of reconstructing a lost country in the world of imagination has become a means of resistance and a response to the historical traumas of dislocation, displacement, and exile for both Native Americans and Palestinians. In this sense, they are considered literatures of resistance and liberation that contribute to the ongoing political and military struggles of indigenous peoples for decolonization. Native American professor Jace Weaver illustrates his definition of resistance literature by borrowing from the Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani: "The phrase "resistance literature" was developed by Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani to describe the literature of that people. It presupposes a people's collective relationship to a common land, a common identity, or a common cause on the basis of which it is possible to distinguish between two modes of existence for the colonized, 'occupation' or 'exile'" (11). Therefore, in Native American and Palestinian literatures, history and colonial/decolonial politics are fundamental in exposing the legacies of settler colonialism in the American and Palestinian contexts and the inherent features they share.

Drawing on the similarities between the Native American and Palestinian experiences which are depicted in literature, scholars in indigenous studies and criticism have brought to light the deep affinities that settler colonialism in America and Palestine share and the convergence of their indigenous peoples' struggles toward sovereign nationhood. Mohamed Heikal argues that the Jewish "desire for a national home was a goal with which any American could sympathize, having parallels in US pioneer history. If Americans had driven the Indians from grazing lands to make space for themselves, why should they object to Jews expelling Palestinians?" (61). This dialectic has been frequently expressed in political discussions about the nature of settler colonialism and its founding principles in America and Palestine. Native American activist Robert Robideau affirms, "The state of Israel sets [sic] on land that was originally Palestinian but Zionist movements in Europe and the United States claimed that 'the land was given to them by God' … Euro-Americans pray to 'god and country' and teach their future generations to pray homage to the gangsters, outlaws and thieves who stole the country from Indian nations in god's name" (website). Likewise, Steven Salaita contends that "Zionist leaders drew inspiration from American history in conceptualizing ways to rid Palestine of its Indigenes … the United States and Israel are more than strategic partners … they are actually bound historically and philosophically in ways that run much deeper than conventional political expediency" (*The Holy Land*, n.p.). Salaita provides deep insightful commentaries on the "covenantal relationship" between the US and Israel grounded in "Holy Land pathos" and that justifies the American financial and philosophical support for Israel. Salaita reveals that there are twenty towns in the United States named Canaan or New Canaan and several others are given the name Palestine in Arkansas, Illinois, Texas, and West Virginia. Ironically, Salaita clarifies, the names of the lands of Canaan and Palestine which existed before 1948 were eradicated to reappear in the United States. Accordingly, Salaita concludes that "much of the colonial process in North America summoned Holy Land themes that would repeat themselves in Palestine in the twentieth century … If white pioneers in the New World could name settlements Canaan, New Canaan, or Palestine, then it is possible for at least theoretical purposes to call Israel a New America" (n.p.).

Having a similar brutal colonial history, Native Americans and Palestinians share militant and cultural resistance to occupation, like many other colonized indigenous peoples in the world. In addition to sharing the strong attachment to the land from which they were expelled or on which they lost control, the resistance of both peoples is organised and performed in nationalist movements, in rewriting indigenous histories to counter the erroneous Western narratives about their existence, and in the intellectual and literary production that contributes heavily in the determined efforts towards decolonization. Native American scholars often refer to Palestinian struggle as a corresponding indigenous experience, stressing the importance of telling indigenous stories to counter the colonial discourse. In this vein, Louis Owens writes:

> American Indians, who like Palestinians, have had to struggle just to have a voice and be acknowledged as "real," have espoused what has seemed to be a losing cause for five centuries. In the face of such history … there were more than three hundred published Indian writers whose collective project is resistance to and the destruction of that colonial American metanarrative that has long been and is still determined to make them invisible. (*Mixedblood,* 130)

Similarly, Nick Tilsen, president and founder of the militant indigenous organization NDN Collective, declares in an interview with Cristina Verán,

> The Oceti Sakowin (People of the Great Plains of North America) are still here, and we will continue to fight for the Black Hills. The colonizer tried to beat the language out of us, they tried to beat our culture out of us, they tried to beat our connection to the land out of us—and they failed. And so, colonization… it's not a done deal. Just like the fate of Palestine is not a done deal.

Reciprocally, the Palestinians have also drawn inspiration in their political activism from the Indian long-lasting resistance. In one of these political activities, a crowd of Palestinians gathered in the town of Huwara in the West Bank dressed as Indians and holding a banner addressed to the visiting American Secretary of State: "The Indian wars are not over, Mrs [Condoleezza] Rice…We are still here, too!!" (qtd. in Salaita; The Ethics of Intercultural Approaches, 4).

Since the colonial history and discourse in the Native and Palestinian experiences are interconnected, this sort of conjoining disparate historical contexts into one global combat for liberation has become necessary to illuminate new paths in political action and nationalist expression. This strategy falls within the inter/nationalist methodology advocated by Steven Salaita and which offers "sincere commitment to solidarity" defined as the "pursuit of common goals—in this

case a common future —rather than appealing to the abstract tenets of existential amity" (Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism* xviii). In this line of thought, literary works written by indigenous writers and the comparative studies that examine the contextual issues of the colonized communities offer historical and cultural juxtapositions whose main goal is solidarity in nationalist action and mutual empowerment. This inter/nationalist solidarity is exemplified in political activism by The Red Nation, a coalition of Native activists advocating Native liberation, that has expressed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle by declaring: "Palestine is the moral barometer of Indigenous North America. … We, The Red Nation, pledge to fulfill our commitment to Palestinian liberation" (*The Red Nation*). In literature, the works of Momaday and Abulhawa that are examined in this study offer comparative possibilities that establish a correlation of Indigenous struggles toward sovereign nationhood.

## Conclusion

This comparative study provides an exploration of historical, cultural, and political relationships among Native Americans and Palestinians in Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* through a post/decolonial lens. Relying on the concepts of culture, memory, and sovereignty, the analysis concentrates on the role and importance of the land in the multifaceted struggle of colonized indigenous communities against settler colonialism. In parallel to political activism, it is demonstrated that literature remains an effective means by which Native and Palestinian writers articulate narratives that preserve and revitalize indigenous cultural identities and that constitute a force of resistance to the dominant colonial hegemonies. In spite of the geographical distance and the distinct cultural entities, the presence of colonial states on Native and Palestinian lands invites correlated commitment to the project of dismantling colonial ideologies and restoring a lost sovereignty. Therefore, the works investigated in this study provide the evidence that Native American and Palestinian literatures will contribute in a vital way in the twenty-first century indigenous movements of resistance to the legacies of settler colonialism.

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