

The Thirdspace of Resistance Literature in Naomi Shihab Nye's "1935" and Hala Alyan's "Hijra"

Zainab Al Qaisi

Department of English Language and Literature, the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Wafa Awni Al Khadra

Department of English Language and Literature, American University of Madaba (AUM), Madaba, Jordan

Abstract—This paper examines the poetry of the two Palestinian American poets, Naomi Shihab Nye and Hala Alyan within the concept of the “thirdspace” of resistance literature. With this premise in mind, the study uses Edward Soja’s concept of “thirdspace” (1998) to examine the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye and Hala Alyan as an articulation of “resistance poetry” exemplified in Ghassan Kanafani’s book entitled *Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine 1948-1966* (1966). The poem itself, as a form, is an imagined geography constructed by the poet’s personal and collective memories that build up his/her spaces of resistance poetry. In these artistic cartographies, memories traverse from contested lands and geographies to a “thirdspace” that recreates a timeline of stories and narratives that unfold the poems’ resistance manifesto. To foreshadow these imagined memories, the poem functions as: first, a documented tool of resistance to forgetfulness; second, an artistic device for articulating memory; third, a “thirdspace” where contested geographies of resistance and resilience dissolve to re-visioning history that curates hybridized literary spaces of prose poetry and cartographies of memory.

Index Terms—Palestinian American poetry, resistance poetry, thirdspace, prose poem, cartographies

I. INTRODUCTION

Palestinian American poets are best known for their devotion to writing about Palestine which has never wavered. Whether living willingly or forcibly in exile, these poets comprise artistic and intellectual leverage in the formation of the global Palestinian literary movement. Amongst the Palestinian American poets who identify themselves as Arab, Arab American, or Palestinian American are Naomi Shihab Nye, Lisa Suhair Majaj, Deema Shehabi, Fady Joudah, Lina Khalaf Tuffaha, George Abraham, Hala Alyan, and others (Handal, 2002; Kaldas & Mattawa, 2020; Charara, 2008). When discussing their poems, critical studies highlight themes including food, family, land, identity, memory, religion, doubleness, and cultural multiplicity. Therefore, this study attempts to explore what emanates from fusing these themes with a variety of poetic devices, focusing on a process that integrates conceptual, thematic, and analytic frameworks. To show how poetry recreates a cartographical timeline of stories and narratives, this paper offers a thematic, analytical, and aesthetic study of Naomi Shihab Nye’s “1935” and Hala Alyan’s “Hijra”.

II. THEORY AND FRAMEWORK

This study aims to explore how the direct memories of displacement, whether resulting in Nakba (the 1948 catastrophe) or Naksa (the 1967 setback), transmute into narratives of the thirdspace through prose poetry as a device of resistance. It argues that Palestinian American poetry produces lyrical spatiotemporal geography of Palestine in a “thirdspace”, to use Soja’s (1998) terminology. This “thirdspace” guards memories and preserves identity from distortion and fabrication put forth in the concocted Israeli and Zionist narratives in their agenda “to rewrite the history of Palestine” (Said, 2000, p. 184). It highlights the idea that Palestinian American poetry is a dynamic part of resistance literature, particularly literary and documentary resistance that resists the erasure and forgetfulness of Palestine and Palestinians, predominantly after Nakba. Thereupon, the study tracks how memories are created or imagined by these poets in an attempt to initiate a poetic space of their resistance.

With this premise in mind, the study highlights four main ideas. The first explores the connection between the poetry of the two Palestinian American poets, Nye and Alyan, and the concept of “resistance poetry” exemplified in Kanafani’s (1966) book. Second, it investigates associations between real and imagined memories by integrating two narratives: the narrative that directly links the poems with places and people from their past, and the indirect narrative that stimulates the poets to reproduce collective memories. Such memories become postmemories that have passed on to these poets through ancestral and familial stories and history, and then the poets can reclaim them as their own, using Said’s (2000) argument on “invented memory”, expounded in his article “Invention, Memory, and Place”. Laila Abu-Lughod (2007) appropriates the concept of postmemory arguing that in the case of the Palestinian generations of Nakba “the past has not yet passed”, and Nakba is still ongoing (Abu-Lughod, 2007, p. 79). The third idea tends to inspect the ways in which history is reclaimed in poetry drawing on Soja’s (1996) concept of “thirdspace”. It refers to a “space of

extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives” creatively (Soja, 1996, p. 5). Taking this argument, the poet becomes a cartographer and a memory-creator, so the poems, in such metaphors, are not geographical maps but rather more of a space with cultural, social, colonial, political, and historical liminalities. Fourth, numerous scholars have investigated prose poems as a genre whereas others have employed it as a tool; nonetheless, many have rejected prose poetry because it violates the form decorum, that is of verse and meter. In “The Prose Poem: An Alternative to Verse”, Lehman (2003) states that prose poetry emerges “in rebellion against tradition” (Lehman, 2003, p. 45). In his view, “for the poet, writing in prose gains one entry into a world formal possibility- the poem as an anecdote, as a letter, as meditation, as plot summary but what is produced is still conceptually a poem” (Lehman, 2003, p. 46).

III. RESISTANCE LITERATURE

In Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine 1948-1966, Ghassan Kanafani (1966) traces the transformation of poetry after Nakba in five main stages. Stage one refers to the appalling silence due to Nakba in which all Palestinians express resentment against occupation through folk songs (i.e., Sahja, mijana, ataaba, mawwal, dal’ona) that express the grief over loss and dispossession. In the second stage, the strident enthusiastic poetry mollifies the consciousness of the masses. It arises to articulate a sense of realization of Nakba; however, poetry in this stage divulges a state of repudiation over the displaced and looted land and memories. Outside Palestine, poetry written in exile effectively subjugates, in form and content, the Arab and foreign intellectual literary movements. Thus, in the early 1950s, as Kanafani comments, exile poetry comprises the third stage. Kanafani sees that “exile poetry has transformed gradually from the state of raucous enthusiasm to the state of sorrowed enthusiasm, yet it is promising that the state of denial after Nakba has bitterly fallen out because the Palestinians’ reality after 1948 has become greater than such disregard” (Kanafani, 1966, p. 29).

Between 1948 and 1951, the fourth stage comes into sight when Zionists in occupied lands ban any attempts at resistance poetry. However, they permit amorous poetry as the only form of expression in an unsuccessful endeavor to stray the Palestinians from writing with an expressive resistance voice to Nakba (Kanafani, 1966, p. 29). Nevertheless, while love poetry cannot cure the Palestinians’ trauma over the Nakba, it becomes a tool of embedded resistance writing. Through amorous poems, Palestinian writers have never stopped resisting occupation. That is why, they present their maneuvering love poems for a beloved woman with reminiscent denotations about the love and homesickness of their homeland, which Kanafani later refers to as the poetry of “Palestinian Cause/ [Qaddiyah]” (Kanafani, 1966, p. 29).

Kanafani (1966) proposes a literary resistance manifesto with a futuristic vision, in which he argues that literature produced by Palestinians regardless of their geographical place or thematic portrayal will “always be pregnant with resistance in its explicit or implicit motifs and allusions (Kanafani, 1966, p. 38).

As a result of emotional and intellectual alienation after the loss of Palestine, the way Palestinian American poets have recalled memories concerning their homeland is of vital importance so as to revise and reclaim their history, fight culturicide, preserve their Palestinian identity and save it from oblivion. They have become resistance icons by mirroring the long-lasting struggle of their people in their poetry. For them, poetry is not the mere pleasure of writing sublime pieces of literature; it is a means of protest and rebellion against those who have expropriated their land, culture, identity, and history. The Israeli occupation agenda in replacing history causes powerlessness felt by the neglected/silenced Palestinians in forced exile or self-imposed exile, and more importantly by Palestinians who were born and grew up in exile with more than one identity and language.

IV. POSTMEMORY AND THIRDSPEACE

In her book, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*, Susan Slyomovics (1998) investigates the Palestinian villages in the narratives of Arabs and Jews pre-and post-1948. Slyomovics (1998) comments on how real and imagined memories of an incurable catastrophe of Palestinians (Nakba, 1948), and paradoxically a triumphant foundation of the state of Israel, take a huge part in conceiving a particular place/land i.e., Palestine. These memories can undergo distortion, removal, replacement, and recreation on both the physical and propagandist levels. She states:

The Palestinian Arab past, as it is imagined, recounted, written, and drawn from memory, involves images and descriptions of specific places and actual settings. Projects commemorating places of memory not only are imaginatively constructed and reconstructed but, according to the French historian Maurice Halbwachs, are also collectively espoused: only communally do we remember (Slyomovics, 1998, p. xi).

Hence, when discussing the Palestinian past, there is a personal solitary story of every Palestinian whether inside the occupied land and/or outside Palestine. These stories comprehensively contribute to shaping memories of lost land.

Edward Said (2003) describes these perceptions of Palestine as absolutely unequal “between the average Palestinian and the average Israeli” (Said, 2003, p. 23). This downright variation appears in the media channels through which our stories are narrated. He elaborates:

We know about it as Arabs, as Palestinians, as neighbors if you like in the Middle East, but in the West, you have no idea for example when you watch a CNN broadcast which is quite different from the CNN you watch

here [Egypt] which is international CNN. But if in America you watch a broadcast about what's happened on the West Bank-let's say yesterday's events-you'll never know that there is a military occupation going on, that's never mentioned. It is simply taken out of context (Said, 2003, pp. 23-24).

Said (2000) discusses the manipulations of the art of memory in the modern world. He states that memory "is both for historians as well as ordinary citizens and institutions very much something to be used, misused, and exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there for each person to possess and contain" (Said, 2000, p. 179). His statement sheds light upon two counter-narratives: The Palestinian one, which is authentic but muted and exploited, and the Israeli one, which is misused and fabricated. In this stand, media and propaganda play an influencing role in rerouting global attention to one narrative over the other. Thus, memories in Palestinian American poetry, though selective, are real and narrate back to the Zionist's misinformative narrative. Similarly, Keith W. Whitelam (1996) discusses strategies of muting memories and historical accounts of Palestine written by others, i.e., Israel, stating that: "[t]he fact that [Israelis] refer to the geographical region as Palestine but never refer to its inhabitants as Palestinians is a denial and silencing of Palestinian history. We are continually presented with images of a land in which its inhabitants are anonymous or nonexistent" (p. 46). Nevertheless, this art of memorizing the past and framing it upon desirable "manipulated and inverted" whims serves the "urgent purposes in the present" (Said, 2000, p. 179), even if it lacks logical reasoning.

Considering this, postmemory emerges to fight back any exclusion of personal or collective memory because it brings about the leavings and remainders from the past and interactively links it to the present. In "Return to Half-Ruins: Memory, Postmemory, and Living History in Palestine, Laila Abu Lughod (2007) adopts Hirsch's concept of postmemory into the Palestinian context exemplifying her father's death and the return story to Jafa. She comments:

Marianne Hirsch, the sensitive analyst of the transfer of traumatic memory across generations among Holocaust survivors, calls postmemory the experience of having one's everyday reality overshadowed by the memory of a much more significant past that one's parents lived through (Hirsch, 1997, p. 22-24, 1999). But the situation she describes is of parental memories of events that have passed. The world has denounced that genocide and those horrors. What I, as the daughter of someone who lived through the Nakba learned from my father's return to Palestine, was that, for Palestinians, both memory and postmemory have a special valence because the past has not yet passed. (Abu Lughod, 2007, p. 79)

In the expression "the past not yet passed," Abu Lughod refers to Palestinians' ongoing remembrance and their capacity to reconstruct their memories in connectivity despite the unstoppable struggle they ought to face every day. In this regard, Abu Lughod and H. Sa'di (2007) argue in "Claims of Memory", how the younger generations are connected to their parental memories, not from a traumatized angle. They state that "It is this next generation that has been making the films, organizing the collection of testimonials, trying to grasp the meaning of the Nakba, while fighting forgetfulness and making public claims on behalf of their parents' and grandparents' suffering" (Abu Lughod & H. Sa'di, 2007, p. 21). I refer to this generation as "the grandchildren of Nakba", considering myself as one, because Nakba is still ongoing due to the Zionist's acts of cleansing, replacing inhabitants, disowning Palestinians from their rights of living or/and returning in Palestine, and most importantly fabricating the image of Palestinians in the global scene through manipulated propaganda.

In another investigation of the Palestinian postmemory, Chrisoula Lionis (2014) in "Past Not Yet Passed: Postmemory in the Work of Mona Hatoum", elaborates on Abu-Lughod's (2007) "the past has not yet passed" saying that "the artist's experience of a double exile is indicative of Abu-Lughod's (2007) suggestion that Palestinian offspring not only carry the surrogate postmemory recollections of their parents but also experience the consequences of these memories directly in their own reality" (Lionis, 2014, p. 79). Lionis explores the continuous narrative between generations, i.e., the mother and daughter in binary relationships, and states that such familial connections rely on "storytelling and narration, history and the present, writing and reading, Arabic and English, subject and artist" (Lionis, 2014, p. 79). These parental relations between mothers/fathers and/or daughters/sons lead to a remembrance in which events from the past become non-events in the present, but simultaneously construct a trustworthy base for the future. In other respects, Abu-Lughod (2007) examines the "perceived" and "conceived" Nakba trauma transferred and passed down from the direct Nakba generations into the next ones and shows, how new modes of expression, memorization, and documentation arise in a newer paradigm that is referred to as "lived/thirdspace" which has unprecedented articulations on the ongoing narratives and recollections of the post-trauma journey.

V. PALESTINIAN AMERICAN PROSE POETRY

Palestinian American poetry re-visions the land/ the narrative as a part of the future and not as an incident from history. Thus, it presents counter-narratives that create an accessible location with a recognized positionality. Subsequently, retrieving replaced memories, dispersed people, or dispossessed land through postmemory is an act of resistance that lives in a future-oriented "thirdspace". Although the context of Palestinian American poetry is sentimental, it is still loaded with resistance to forgetfulness, and rejection to live in a frozen trauma; it ignites the creation of an alternative space, which resides in the poem itself. While, seemingly, written in free verse, Palestinian American poetry can also be classified as **prose poetry** which is a distinguishing characteristic that functions as an adequate form of expressing historical narratives and postmemories. In prose poems as Mary Oliver (1994) states, the features of prose writing like characters, settings, etc. exist in the poem. She elaborates on the effective play between

themes and language in prose poems which succeed in “making the language work *without the musicality of the line*. The syntax found in prose poems is often particularly exquisite, combining power and grace” (Oliver, 1994, pp. 86-87). A meticulous investigation of what prose poetry is and is not shall demonstrate how prose poetry can be a device of expressing literary resistance not only in its form, but through its use of language, the spatiotemporal imageries it employs, and the sequential narrative of an incident or a story. To do so, this study traces major works on the creation of the prose poem in American literature. Originally established by the great French poets like Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud, prose poetry expands to become the new poetry of the late twentieth-century poets in America, particularly with Robert Bly, John Ashbery, and others worldwide (Bernstein, 1962; Fredman, 1990; Oliver, 1994; Delville, 1998). What prose poetry offers- regardless of the rejections it receives or the confrontations it faces- according to Fredman (1990), is not the authenticity and genuine capacity to create a system, but it is the potential of prose poetry to generate “a space of permission” for the world to exist through language (Fredman, 1990, p. 8). Such “space of permission” grants the poet with the vast experimentations to practice in a creative and innovative encounter with what language and form might do in favor of an idea, a concept, a feeling, or a fight against the dogmatic tide of the definition of poetry in the contemporary times. In “Stephen Fredman’s Poet’s Prose: The Crisis In American Verse,” Delville (1998) scrutinizes and traces the prose poem as stated in Fredman’s book particularizing the experience of prose poem poets from the sixties up to contemporary times. Delville has reached a conclusion that serves this paper’s argument of considering Palestinian American Poetry as prose, in that he concludes:

[I]t is precisely that tension between content and form, innovation and tradition, which forces the poet to come up with fresh, innovative work, and makes a prose poem, perhaps more than any other poem, an interesting experience. Fortunately enough, critics interested in the prose poem have not yet produced for it an academic handbook of reading strategies, a formalized way of introducing readers and students to what should or should not be considered a prose poem, as well as to what many have diagnosed as the antagonism between the genre and the lyric-based premises of “mainstream” poetry (Delville, 1998, p. 9).

Stating this, through the discussion of Nye’s and Alyan’s poems, this study attempts to create “a space of permission” to define what a Palestinian American prose poem might be, not only in the light of the poems selected in this study but also with regard to the two poet’s general literary production of other poems. Hence, the prose poem achieves a kind of malleable experimentation in Palestinian American poetry. According to Horvath (1992), first, “prose poem offers resources that must be available to poetry if poetry is to retain its status as that use of language that most fully exploits the language’s resources” (Horvath, 1992, p. 12). On the one hand, Nye (2011) introduces language exploitation in the introduction to *Transfer* by using her father’s incomplete notes and stories to create the unsaid dialogue between them (Nye, 2011, p. 11). She produces a poetic dialogue using her father’s voice who maneuvers between oppositions to clarify his standpoint and story from various perspectives. In traditional verse poetry, brevity is the soul of wit; however, in prose poetry brevity is not about using eloquent language, but rather about using this language eloquently. Thus, *Transfer’s* well-traced narrative evokes questions about the Palestinians in America and maps a mode of recollection and reminiscence between generations. In “War”, Nye takes the mission of retelling her grandmother’s stories and adds to them the others’ which occur after her death, then ironically, she questions who knows, she says:

Where did we bury Sitti?
 I will wait beside her stone,
 telling the same story she told
 of the river of waiting, how some of us
 fall into it and are not seen again.
 How some end up in another paradox
 with a changed name, Mahmoud to Mo,
 lost in small shops making change
 for gasoline. If this is persistence,
 Who knows? I’m stuck in the corner of war
 that’s not even called war, pressed like a pigeon
 into a twig cage, my dry eyes flaming (Nye, 2011, p. 50).

The combination of death represented in the burial, and life embodied by alterations in identity and names, or relocation of a home is put in a conversational frame that one might hear in a speech or a complaint matter, however; language shifts from a questioning narrative to a poetic inquisitorial urge to express the desire to fight against such a demolishing act of war.

On the other hand, in Alyan’s (2016) *Hijra*, language seems to be complex, tight, and maneuvering- in comparison to Nye’s simple and implicit language, but it runs in the narratives smoothly. *Hijra* (2016) is testimonial poetry with cinematic potential and detail-oriented in fewer words that are scientifically burdened with denotative synonyms of meaning. This can be seen in many poems, particularly “New Year” where she says: “I want the vandalized night, rock water/ from a cavern, my eyes copper coins/ strewn at the bottom of the gypsy/ fountain. Owls fleck the air with/ bids of love” (Alyan, 2016, p. 6). Then Alyan brings about the idea of refugees and the inheritance of pain in their exodus while she keeps the beautiful lingual consistency and says: “I’m afraid, a refugee selling/ flowers red as a blazing forest calls/

me wife. We river onto maps with/ shaking hands, skittish, non grata, / as the snow blankets our reckless lives” (Alyan, 2016, p. 6). Though lyrical, musical, and rhythmical, the story surfaces vividly.

Second, prose poems release themselves from decorum, yet they take a free shape that shows their artistic values. Horvath (1992) rightly states that “the prose poem offers itself as a form relatively free from conventions and expectations, thus enhancing one’s artistic freedom, one’s liberation from seriousness, generic constraints, and the self-consciousness of producing literature” (Horvath, 1992, p. 12). Nye and Alyan exploit this freedom thematically and aesthetically in content and form through their deviation from the traditional methods of oral narrative and the nonconformity of free verse. An example of such an artistic method is when Alyan (2016) describes an incident that occurred in January in her poem “Aria” saying “the greed of us ruins dresses and I am one/ fire chasing another. Exodus will find me cutting/ throats, breaking my hunger” (Alyan, 2016, p. 7). Another example is from Nye’s poem “Maximum Security” in which she describes the streets and spaces where people march and make changes, she says “past tense/ more exquisite than the present, / and repetition, mysterious comfort/ of rolling back-to-back syllables, / when it might be better to insert/ a new phrase or start over entirely, / if only, beams of light” (Alyan, 2016, p. 51). Though short and condensed, their poetry follows a sequential plot expressed in the conventional poetic sentence line, which breaks into a series of enjambments, by producing fragments of sentences, paragraphs, and excerpts of dialogues or imagination. Prose poems free the poets’ expression and release their stories poetically. Resistance, in this sense, is manifested in this type of poetry as it rejects conventional modes of writing without aligning to verse rules, disregards the mainstream narratives, and replaces them with various polyphonic voices and epic-like traits.

Horvath (1992) adds that “the prose poem encourages the reader’s active participation as co-creator not only of meaning but of the text as poem” (Horvath, 1992, p. 13). Narratives of postmemory in each poem invite the readers to conjunct the narrative chain of postmemories by appropriating the poem to their context and inventing a new scheme of storytelling that is both personal and affiliative.

Finally, prose poems show a mixture of language, images, architecture, art, music, news excerpts, and maps which resemble a normal scene in our hectic life. Analysis of Nye’s “1935” and Alyan’s “Hijra”, further illustrate this freedom in Palestinian American prose poetry where the poet in resistance poems creates postmemory narratives in a lucid “thirdspace. In her collection of poems *Transfer* (2011), Nye (2011) speaks about her Palestinian American heritage, her American identity in Texas, and her journeys between airports and countries. Nye embracingly reveals her both Arab and American cultural diversity through intoned poems that reflect the perspective of a lamented daughter who imagines the bursting scenarios of what her father feels and thinks of every situation and event through his life in exile. Nye (2011) writes in the introduction of *Transfer* (2011) about the unaccomplished project of writing a book with her father. She comments: “My father wanted us to write a book together. A “dialogue,” he called it. But he kept sending me monologues by e-mail and fax. Rants on topics I’d heard him discuss many times- frustrations, difficulties, peculiarities of a long life-in-exile. Perspectives on this and that” (Nye, 2011, p. 11). This introductory statement paves the path along with the title “Transfer” for the reader to understand how stories, monologues, and situations can become a source of memory and creation. Nye transforms all incomplete conversations and fragments between her father and herself into a museum of words and carries the guardianship of memory.

VI. NYE’S “1935” AND ALYAN’S “HIJRA”

With a chaotic desk full of stacks of paper and journals of a late father, Nye (2011), with unfinished stories of her father, with short/long titles, fragmented scenes, and jumbled notes, sews the voice of her father, Aziz, into a little series of poems under the title “Just Call Me Aziz”. In these poems, Aziz’s-voice is lyrically loud and the weaver is a daughter who guards her father’s narrative and tries to express his grief for Palestine. For Aziz, Palestine “was a landmass underwater” that is drowned in memory and remembrance (Nye, 2011, p. 13). Nye inaugurates her postmemorial narratives of Palestine through the memories of an unusual man, her father, and paves the exposition of her stories to the listener/ reader by tracing back history when the sailor Ahmed Bin Majed, in the 15th century, “wrote about the movements of stars, /sang praise to the moon and the waves” (Nye, 2011, p. 17) in a charming comparison between traveling then and today and how it becomes difficult to “see stars/ for light and haze” (Nye, 2011, p. 17). Then, Nye brings the image of the airport where various people progress with familiar facial expressions, and differentiated luggage checked in and out in customary shapes and sizes. She alludes, in her initial poem “History”, to the lost odyssey of the historical line to which her father and she belong:

We were born to wander, to grieve
lost lineage, what we did to one another,
on a planet so wide open to doing (Nye, 2011, p. 17).

In the first part of *Transfer*, Nye (2011) paves the narrative through focal points in the life of an immigrant like her father. She starts with “History” talking about the status of a person in exile as being unclear, foggy, and uncertain due to the endless wandering for a lost land with lamentation and unfathomable grief. Then, she moves to “1935” in which her eight-year-old father appears in a photograph “standing behind a table of men/ dipping bread in hummus” (Nye, 2011, p. 18). The scene describes the boy sitting with these men who are gathering for a meal and eating bread and other types of dipped-in food; here, the real scene in the photograph ends. However, Nye wonders if this little boy has eaten enough food or bread rips. She does not know the answer and wishes that her father was alive to answer if he has

ever got to eat the last bite. Yet then, her reflection of what she sees in this photograph emerges in a direct speech to her father: “You beam as if you own the whole city, / could go anywhere in Jerusalem, / watch overeating with affection, / waiting your turn” (Nye, 2011, p. 18). In this stanza, Nye (2011) connects with the little boy to this scene as a part of a family and a dweller of a city that happens to be Jerusalem and pities him for waiting for his turn to eat. However, the last (third) stanza of “1935” holds a surprising inquiry into her father’s frozen memory in the photograph in a manner that initiates the stories. She utters in the following poems in her book:

You spoke inside
my head the moment before I saw it.
Now the picture hangs
beside my desk, holding
layered lost worlds where
you are, not only the person I knew
but the person before the person I knew,
in your universe, your life’s possible story,
still smiling (Nye, 2011, p. 18).

In this poem, Nye plays with time between the past, present and future. She conflicts with a photo against a memory of her father, a re-memory of the particular event in the photograph, and a postmemory created by her while writing the poem. In “1935”, the poet is in direct interaction with a photograph of her father when he was eight years old. Hirsch (2008) explains that “Photography’s promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power, makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 107). This explains Nye’s imaginative interpretation of her father’s situation in the photo while she describes the type of story this photo holds in its details.

Nye (2011) describes the setting where her father sits around a dining table with elders eating something. She knows that it is in Palestine, Jerusalem, in that age and wonders whether the men have given little Aziz the last bite of bread or not. She observes the photograph and wishes that her father is alive so that he can tell her the unrevealed part of the story. Nevertheless, now that her father is dead, she becomes the narrator of her story and her father’s photograph story and imagines how this little boy has been crossing the streets of Jerusalem like a beam that is owning the whole city. She gets this photograph, which has been hung on the wall of her friend and places it by her desk where she feels her father’s closeness. Now with her father sitting in that photograph, she envisions the greatness of knowing her father not only as the person she knows but also as the person before the person she knows. In her father’s world, the one in the photograph or the one with whom she shares her life, his life’s would-be narrative still smiling, she tells her father: “in your universe, your life’s possible story, / still smiling” (Nye, 2011, p. 18).

In-Camera *Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, to further explain the associations in photography, Ronald Barthes (1982) reflects on photography and how “the photograph mechanically repeats what never be repeated existentially” (Barthes, 1998, p. 4). Therefore, what Nye reflects in “1935” resembles what Barthes (1998) refers to in his book when he discusses how “a photograph can be the object of three practices, or of three emotions, or of three intentions): to do, to undergo, to look” (Barthes, 1998, p. 4). In reference to Nye’s poem, the photographer (anonymous) is “the operator”. Nye, her friend, and everyone who glances at her father’s photograph is “the spectator”, and her father is “the spectacle” according to Barthes’s three practices. Regardless of “the operator”, the photographer who documents that moment, the relationship between “the spectator”, the poet, and “the spectacle”, her father is dual. “The spectator” interacts with the photograph on two levels: the familial as a daughter who remembers and connects her familial relationship with this 8-year-old child, “you are, not only the person I knew/ but the person before the person I knew” (Nye, 2011, p. 18), and the little Aziz as a poet who constructs worlds, memories, and space of “the spectrum” particularly when she imagines her father as beaming and running in Jerusalem, “you beam as if you owned the whole city./ could go anywhere in Jerusalem” (Nye, 2011, p. 18). The poet, through such “memorial construction” resists the absence of “the spectacle” who returns differently due to the poet’s impulse of reclaiming a memory. In this respect, Barthes refers to this relationship between “the spectator” and “the spectacle” as “the return of the dead” (Barthes, 1982, p. 9).

In her third poetry collection, *Hijra*, Alyan (2016) writes poems of relocation and flight reflecting and “bearing witness” to the lingering details in her trans-worldly journey in line with other past journeys of her mother, her aunts, and every possible female ancestor between Palestine, Syria, and America. Unlike Nye, Alyan’s poetic conversation is complex and heavy; yet, it embodies the shape of intangible feelings and particulars like loss, grief, chaos, displacement, alienation, and wandering between places. Alyan’s *Hijra* chronicles her family’s personal history by sharing these stories of war, dispersion, and immigration which physically and mentally synchronizes with the collective history of all Palestinians. These stories which, to some extent, voice downgraded women evolve to another level of documenting a historical narrative of a whole nation. With a focus on women’s journeys, Alyan discusses how women are carriers of memory and guardians of its transmission to the next generations.

Alyan (2016) divides *Hijra* into four parts with an epigraph of each that indicates the type of narrative she tells. The collection starts with a single poem entitled “Ancestry”, in which Alyan (2016) opens the story by lamenting the perished cities and longing for the roots of her ancestry. However, she inquires about the stories our fathers tell us about our origins and past: “Our fathers tell/ the story of this luminous dust, / a soil red as zinnias” (Alyan, 2016, p. 1). In

these lines, Alyan presents the unfinished narrative that is scattered, and works on recollecting all those stories, assembles their parts, and then mingles them into a polyphonic experience of memorization and space creation. In part one, Alyan quotes Mahmoud Darwish's "[t]he exile tells himself: "If I were a bird/ I would burn my wings" (Alyan, 2016, p. 4), to discuss how living in the new city is an exile from everything she knows. In part two, Alyan (2016) quotes Etel Adnan "[i]n the deluge on our plains there are no rain but stones" (Alyan, 2016, p. 18), to introduce women's stories of suffering between the borders and *en route* from home to nowhere, or somewhere. In part three, Alyan quotes Joy Harjo's "[t]he map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light" (Alyan, 2016, p. 36), to map the real narratives and relocate memories of time and place interchangeably. Finally, in part four, Alyan (2016) quotes Kazim Ali "I wanted to be those stairs, the hunger I felt, the river inside" (Alyan, 2016, p. 50) to document her participation in the act of memory and open new spaces of postmemory and resistance.

Sleepwalkers, uterus dust, you heard the gunfire
and folded into clay. We begged our bodies for Alchemy, death into new lungs; we fed bread
to the *jinn* (Alyan, 2016, p. 15).

The shocking introduction in the poem describing the migrants who fled from the reckless bullets reveals the tension and pain of these displaced people who are still in trauma over this preposterous act of dispersion. Migrants are sleepwalkers who drag their bodies between life and death and share food with supernatural creatures i.e., *jinn*. Alyan draws the map of departure where place shifts in time and time flip with or against the migrants, and memory of this painful incident travels back and forth between generations. What is quintessential in this poem is the voice of Alyan herself that echoes every single voice of all migrants; the story is the same even if people are different and their journey varies in length. The suffering of loss, the marching to the unknown, the burial of bodies, the delivery of mothers, and the breasts that have fed babies and adults all dissolve in one weeping narrative. Alyan uses elective metaphors to manifest transition at its maximum brutal imagery. She utilizes realistic descriptions of sight, smell, sound, and touch senses to convey a holistic relocation of memory.

We wrote their unsaid names
on parchment, buried them in boxes, gave birth
to our daughters in caves. When our breasts wept
milk for months, we drank it ourselves (Alyan, 2016, p. 15).

Alyan (2016) draws a cinematic dusty storyboard that is apocalyptically undaunted, cruel, and yet profuse. She depicts not only the transition of immigrants lyrically, but also builds liminal spaces of expression, suffering, and boundaries *en route* to nowhere. What is quintessential about Alyan's collection is the outrageous continuity in binding the paradoxes; in "Hijra" she combines opposites metaphors whose intensity emerges in conjunctive binaries of home and exile, "uterus dust,/ we fed bread to the *jinn*,/ Allah's calligraphy stitched our vertebrae" (Alyan, 2016, p. 15), The surrealist approach which Alyan employs to write these melancholic scenarios of "Hijra" dances in a minefield of memory where history recounts itself in the narratives of immigrants, and in the songs of usurped lands. Alyan's *Hijra* creates intense portrayals of suffering and the brutality of *tahgeer* (displacement). It is a glorifying canto of resilience to cleansing, violence, and oppression and resistance to fabrications and demolishing of home and identity narratives in history.

VII. CONCLUSION

Acts of resistance in Nye's and Alyan's poetry differ from the five stages of resistance poetry to which Kanafani refers; instead, their poems blossom from a different stance where memory is guarded through developed narratives of the past. The authenticated history in these narratives is linked metaphorically to the past, the present, and the future in a "thirdspace" that is authentic, real, and yet selective and imagined. The act of imagination by Palestinians who rebuild their homelands, houses, and memories of sound, smell, touch, taste, and sight highlights the story of individual and collective dispossession and displacement and varies from the act of distortion and fabrication by Israelis/Zionists who strive to replace the history of Palestinians by negating the presence and marginalizing their narratives. For Palestinians, their memory is not a past occurrence, but rather an ongoing postmemory that transfers from one generation to the other linearly and conjunctionally creating more space to trace land, people, and history.

Naomi Shihab Nye and Hala Alyan's exemplary Palestinian American poetry re-vision the land/the narrative as a part of the future and not as an incident from history. Accordingly, retrieving stolen memories, dispersed people, or a dispossessed land through postmemory is an act of resistance that resides in a future-oriented "thirdspace". Through this minimal scrutinized examination of Nye's "1935" and Alyan's "Hijra", this study concludes that Palestinian American prose poem is the poetry of resistance because of its unique free experimentation in form, style, and language. Prose poetry facilitates the intention of narrating and commenting on catastrophic incidents through brevity in Language and the employment of thematic techniques in favor of style i.e., photography, biography, letters, news reports, and others.

Both poets become cartographers of a "thirdspace" through their exploitation of their familial and affiliative stories and transforming them into current remembrance through "postmemory". Like some monuments that are constructed to tell a story in history, Palestinian American poetry initiates a movable monument in every poem to keep the narrative never-ending.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abu-Lughod, Lila. (2007). Return to Half-Ruins: Memory, Postmemory, and Living History in Palestine. *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and The Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 77-104.
- [2] Al Maleh, Layla. (2009). From Romantic Mystics to Hyphenated Ethnics: Arab-American Writers Negotiating/ Shifting Identities. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*. New York: Rodopi, 423-448.
- [3] Alyan, Hala. (2016). *Hijra*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- [4] Barthes, Roland. (1982). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- [5] Bernstein, Joseph M. (1947). *Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine: Selected Verse and Prose Poems*. New York: The Citadel Press Collection.
- [6] Brooker, Peter. (2003). *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*. New York: Arnold.
- [7] Charara, Hayan, ed. (2008). *Inclined to speak: an anthology of contemporary Arab American poetry*. University of Arkansas Press.
- [8] Delville, Michel. (1998). Stephen Fredman's Poet's Prose: The Crisis in American Verse. *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*, 7, 1-9.
- [9] Delville, Michel. (2017). The Prose Poem and the Microessay. *Text, Special Issue 1*, no.46, 1-7.
- [10] Farag, Joseph, R. (2017). *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile: Gender, Aesthetics and Resistance in the Short Story*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- [11] Fredman, Stephan. (1990). *Poet's Prose: The Crisis in American Verse*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [12] Handal, Nathalie. (2002). *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*. New York: Interlink Books.
- [13] Hirsch, Marianne. (2008). The Generation of postmemory. *Poetics Today*, 29.1, 103-128.
- [14] Horvath, Brooke. (1992). The Prose Poem And The Secret Life Of Poetry. *The American Poetry Review*, 21.5, 12-14.
- [15] Kaldas, Pauline; Mattawa, Khaled eds. (2020). *Beyond Memory: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Creative Nonfiction*. University of Arkansas Press.
- [16] Kanafani, G.. (1966, 2013). *Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine 1948-1966*. Cyprus: Rimal Books.
- [17] Lehman, David. (2003). The Prose Poem: An Alternative to Verse. *The American Poetry Review*, 32, 2, 45-49.
- [18] Lionis, Chrisoula. (2014). Past Not Yet Passed: Postmemory in the Work of Mona Hatoum. *Social Text*, 119, 32, 2, 77-93.
- [19] Nye, Naomi Shihab. (2011). *Transfer*. New York: BOA Editions LTD.
- [20] Oliver, Mary. (1994). *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry*. Boston: Mariner Books.
- [21] Sa'di, Ahmad H.; Abu-Lughod, Laila. (2007). *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [22] Said, Edward W. (2000). Invention, Memory, and Place. *Critical Inquiry*, 26, 2, 175-192.
- [23] Said, Edward W. (2004). Memory, Inequality, and Power: Palestine and the Universality of Human Rights. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 24, 15-33.
- [24] Soja, Edward W. (1996). *Third space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- [25] Slyomovics, Susan. (1998). *The object of memory: Arab and Jews narrate the Palestinian village*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- [26] Whitehead, Anne. (2009). *Memory*. New York: Routledge.
- [27] Whitelam, Keith. (1996). *The Invention of Ancient Israel: the silencing of Palestinian History*. New York: Routledge.



Zainab "Moh'd Said" Al Qaisi: A PhD candidate in Palestinian American Literature and Postmemory studies at The University of Jordan. Editor at Large at *Wasafiri* magazine for international writing. A literary translator and editor. She is the founder & CEO of two startups: Al Nqsh LTD (2020) and The Writing Room (2021). Zainab is an academic researcher and critic who is interested in literary and cultural studies, and comparative studies in the fields of Feminist literature, postmemory, and thirdspace.



Wafa Awni Al Khadra: Wafa AlKhadra holds a Ph.D. in English Literature and has many research interests and publications within the realm of literature, cultural studies, and women's studies. She is a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Centre for Human Rights. Wafa is an Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at the Department of English Language and Literature / American University of Madaba (AUM).

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Wafa_Alkhadra

<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=SQKRpFoAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3485-113X>

Scopus Author: Wafa Alkhadra 220906031063