

Love in the Time of Conflict: Resilience, Resistance, and Human Connection in Palestinian War Narratives

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Abstract

This paper examines how love is depicted as a means of survival, resistance, and resilience in the current Palestinian war narratives. The study of conflict has focused on aspects of violence, displacement, trauma and political struggle, but there is less emphasis on the emotional aspect of conflict, namely love and human connection. This study examines how familial love, romantic love, communal love, and love for the homeland function as mechanisms of survival in the context of occupation, exile and militarized violence, focusing on the work of Ahed Tamimi and Dena Takruri, *They Called Me a Lioness: A Palestinian Girl's Fight for Freedom* and *Ever Since I Did Not Die* by Ramy Al-Asheq. The paper examines the emotional landscapes that are created within these texts by drawing from Edward Said, Homi Bhabha,

Sara Ahmed, Cathy Caruth and Cynthia Enloe and employing trauma studies, postcolonial theory, and affect theory. According to the study, “love” in Palestinian narratives is not confined to the realm of personal feeling, but is a political act of resistance to dehumanization and cultural erasure. Palestinian writers take back humanity in the face of war and displacement through the medium of storytelling, memory, care, and emotional connections to land and community. Additionally, the paper shows that the concept of emotional resiliency and interpersonal relations contradicts the dominant imagery of Palestinians as victims of conflict. Love and emotional survival are foregrounded, thus making the study relevant to the current debates on war literature, trauma studies, and postcolonial literary criticism.

Keywords: Palestinian literature, war narratives, love, resistance, resilience, trauma, homeland, displacement, emotional survival

Introduction

Traditionally, war literature has been dominated by themes of violence, trauma, displacement, nationalism and political conflict. When the horrors of war are discussed in literary and conflict studies, it is usually related to the psychological and social consequences of war, especially exile, suffering, and loss. These themes are central to the study of the narratives of conflict but there is often less scholarly focus on emotional experiences, like love, care, intimacy, and human connection. But Palestinian war accounts show that despite being under occupation, displaced, and living under the rule of the military, love is inextricably a force for survival and resistance. These stories are not about feelings but about politics, about love as a way to maintain identity, humanity and the continuity of the community.

Palestinian lives are defined by decades of colonial occupation, forced displacement, political violence and exile. Palestinian communities have suffered from the loss of their homeland, the disintegration of their families, refugee experience and ongoing military oppression since 1948. These historical facts have made a significant impact on Palestinian

literature, a means of memory, resistance, and the reclaiming of humanity. Palestinian artists and writers have always been using memoirs, poetry, fiction, and autobiographical accounts to record experiences that are often disregarded or ignored by dominant political discourses.

Palestinian identity and history have been marginalized and excluded from the narratives of both colonial and western perceptions of Palestinians, whether as a threat or as faceless victims (Said 5). Palestinian literature is thus an important cultural arena in which silenced voices regain their agency and express their depth of feeling. Palestinian writers use storytelling to challenge the dehumanization of the Palestinian people, focusing on the normal human interactions they have with family members, emotional ties, memory and yearning. Literature doesn't only become an art form, it's also a political act of resistance to erasure.

They Called Me a Lioness and *Ever Since I Did Not Die* are two emotionally charged accounts of survival in the face of violence and displacement in our contemporary Palestinian narratives. While both texts are created from different literary forms and experiences, there is a common theme of preserving humanity within the destruction. Tamimi's memoir is a blend of personal recollections and political resistance, chronicling the daily life of a village under Israeli occupation, Nabi Saleh. Al-Asheq, in his text, on the other hand, deals with the notions of exile, displacement, and emotional fragmentation in poetic prose and reflections on war and refugeehood. These texts together show the ways in which love is an emotion and a politics in Palestinian war narratives.

Familial love is one of the most important forms of love depicted in these writings. Family relationships are created as a place of emotional safety and cultural inheritance in violent political contexts. Grandmothers, mothers, fathers and siblings are a source of care, memory and resiliency. Tamimi consistently refers to her grandmother's storytelling as emblematic of the very survival of Palestinian history and identity. Likewise, in the section on houses, families, and memory, Al-Asheq's reflections illustrate emotional attachment in the

face of displacement and destruction. The familial love is thus a way by which Palestinians retain their identity across the generations.

Palestinian literature also encompasses a love for homeland as a focal point. The homeland is not just a place of geography, but a place of emotions, belonging, and memory, of culture. Springs, names of villages, names of the cities, and olive trees turn to emotional symbols of continuity and resistance. Palestinian attachment to land is not just personal in nature, it is also emotional and historical, as displacement can affect not only lands but also emotional and historical existence. The concept of “unhomeliness” developed by Homi Bhabha illustrates how displaced people may suffer from divided identities and still have an emotional attachment to their homeland (Bhabha 9). In both Tamimi's and Al-Asheq's pieces, the homeland lives on in memory, storytelling, and feelings of loss.

Within these texts, familial and national love are also strengthened by the manifestation of romantic love and communal solidarity. In places of fear and uncertainty, romantic love may provide a refuge for moments of emotionality. Likewise, communal care and solidarity is vital to life during occupation and exile. Shared emotional support, collective resistance, and caregiving are common strategies that help Palestinian communities survive violence and displacement. Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies can also help to understand the ways in which grief, hope, love and anger flow together in oppressed communities and contribute to the construction of communal identity (Ahmed 8).

More than that, these texts defy the dominant images of Palestinians as victims and sufferers. Tamimi and Al-Asheq portray the lives of Palestinians as more than political caricatures by portraying everyday emotional moments like love, laughter, longing, and care. Love itself is resistance because it is a claim to humanity in systems that are supposed to create fear, fragmentation and dehumanization.

The paper thus provides a look into the mechanisms of emotional survival and political resistance at play in the works of *They Called Me a Lioness* and *Ever Since I Did Not Die*, where familial love, romantic love, communal solidarity, and love for homeland are at work. The study draws on the theoretical framework of postcolonialism, the theories of trauma, feminist conflict theory and affect theory to engage with the concept of love that rises above personal emotion in Palestinian war narratives to become a strategy for survival. In their work writers in Palestine demand to be remembered, cherished and to be human in the context of Occupation and Exile. In their writing Palestinian writers demand to be remembered, cared for, and to be human in the context of Occupation and Exile.

Literature Review

The Palestinian war literature has received much scholarly interest for portraying displacement, trauma, exile, nationalism and resistance. The work of Palestinian historians and theorists is quite extensive and has been studied in detail as it has addressed the impact of colonial occupation and political violence on identity and collective memory. In contrast to the burgeoning scholarship on the Palestinian conflict literature, however, there has been less research on emotional experiences like love, care, intimacy, and human connection as modes of resistance and survival. Few studies are able to look at the emotional systems that allow people and communities to survive violence and displacement without predominantly concentrating on suffering and trauma.

Edward Said's critique of Orientalism is one of the theoretical bases that has guided the study of Palestinian literature. According to Said, the Orientalism was a systematic process wherein the "Orient" was defined as irrational, inferior, and uncivilized to justify the domination by the Western colonizers (Said 3). Palestinians, in those representations, are often lacking in humanity and individuality. In *The Question of Palestine*, Said expands on this theme, noting that the Palestinian voice and experience has always been overshadowed by

political discourses (Said 5). He is essential as a voice to the literature of Palestine and its struggle to reclaim humanity through storytelling, memory, and lived experience as a counter-discourse.

This debate has been further extended by scholars who are studying within the framework of postcolonial studies, and who are concerned with issues of displacement and fragmented identity. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha theorizes the notion of “unhomeliness,” by which he means that the colonized and displaced experience a psychological fragmentation while being compelled to have an emotional attachment to homeland and cultural memory (Bhabha 9). Displacement, Bhabha says, brings about an “in-between” existence for people, a living between absence and attachment. This is significant to Palestinian literature since Palestinian narratives often revolve around characters who are emotionally attached to both their homes and landscapes, even when physically absent from them.

The study of trauma has also had a profound impact on the analysis of war stories. Trauma, according to Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, destabilizes normative experience and can be “recycled” as “fractured memories and narratives” (4). Trauma can't always be literally captured due to its scope going past energetic language and understanding. This fragmentation is often echoed in Palestinian literature in the form of remembrances of exile, violence, death and displacement. The emphasis on pain and victimhood, however, is more evident in much trauma scholarship than is the comparatively little attention paid to emotional resistance, love and care.

More recently, however, this restriction has been questioned by the study of emotional relationships in conflict zones. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* is an important text for understanding the social and political work of emotions by Sara Ahmed. Ahmed claims that emotions are not simply individual emotions but are shared within communities, and that they

also play a role in the building of identities and social ties (8). Her concept of “affective economies” resonates especially with Palestinian narratives as it recognizes the communal nature of experiencing feelings like grief, longing, anger, hope and love under a regime of occupation and exile. Ahmed's work is a key to understanding the political significance of emotional ties to homeland, family and community.

Likewise, feminist conflict theorists have raised the issue of "emotional labor" and "caregiving" in war zones. Enloe (67) states in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* that women's roles in times of war have been overlooked although they are vital to the survival of a community. Women bear the burden of families, keep alive cultural traditions, and offer emotional support during time of violence and instability, Enloe points out. In Palestinian literature, mothers and grandmothers are often described as the guardians of memory, identity and emotional continuity. Such depictions show that caring can be a form of resistance to social fragmentation and dehumanization.

Palestinian Literature scholars have focused almost exclusively on Nationalism, Exile and political resistance. In the study of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, for instance, the focus is frequently on the emotional experience of homeland, memory, and exile as key features of Palestinian identity. Likewise, Ghassan Kanafani's literature is studied in terms of themes such as dispossession, refugeehood and revolutionary consciousness. These studies recognize distressing emotions, but don't often explore love as a political and cultural force.

This gap has been tried to be filled by more recent interdisciplinary studies in conflict. Roxani Krystalli and Philipp Schulz assert that love and caring are not to be taken “lightly” in conflict and peace studies, but are “very much” at play in how societies can survive, and perhaps, rebuild after violence (Krystalli and Schulz 2). They break with traditional perspectives on war studies that focus on violence and neglect emotional strengths and human

relationships. Care, intimacy and emotional solidarity are key aspects of comprehending the ways in which communities manage trauma and displacement.

The current scholarship thus offers valuable theoretical frameworks for analyzing Palestinian narratives from the perspectives of post-colonialism, trauma studies, feminist theory and affect theory. But critical studies that specifically analyse love in the context of resilience and resistance in Palestine's war literature are still limited. There is also a lack of focus on the role of familial love, romantic feelings, communal unity, and emotional ties to the homeland in modern Palestinian stories.

This study aims to fill this void by concentrating on *They Called Me a Lioness* and *Ever Since I Did Not Die*. This paper explores emotional relationships as both survivor and cultural continuity, as well as political agency, as contrasted with previous scholarship that focuses on trauma and victimization. The study explores the structuring of love in Palestinian war narratives through close textual analysis and shows that it is not a separate from, but rather deeply intertwined with, identity, memory, resistance and humanity.

Methodology

This research is qualitative and interpretative, aiming to analyse the representation of love as an aspect of emotional survival and resistance in the Palestinian war stories within the contemporary context. The study uses a textual analysis approach of two primary texts which are selected: *They Called Me a Lioness* by Ahed Tamimi and Dena Tahruri and *Ever Since I Did Not Die* by Ramy Al-Asheq. The texts have been chosen for their rich language and literary portrayals of Palestinian experiences during occupation, exile, displacement, memory, and emotional resiliency. In both works, the personal and collective experiences are foregrounded as are emotional relationships in the context of political violence.

Close textual reading is the main analytical approach used in the study. The research examines narrative structure, imagery, symbolism, emotional expression and characters

relationships in detail to pinpoint common themes in the texts, including love in the family, romantic love, love in the community, and love for their home country. Special focus is given to the representation of emotional experiences in contexts that are war, military occupation, displacement, and exile. The passages of text chosen are not only examined for their thematic value but also for their emotional and political contents.

The research is interdisciplinary and utilizes the theories of postcolonial studies, trauma theory, affect theory, and feminist conflict studies. The postcolonial theory is valuable for exploring the interconnections between the colonial power and the cultural representation. Palestinian stories are taken up to study how they resist dehumanisation and bring back the suppressed identity through story and emotional representation (Said 3). The denial of Palestinian voice and history is especially relevant in regard to how these texts establish humanity through intimate and personal experiences.

The study also draws upon Homi Bhabha's notion of "unhomeliness" from *The Location of Culture* for an analysis of the emotional implications of displacement and exile (Bhabha 9). The concept of 'homesickness' can be understood with the help of Bhabha's framework. This is particularly relevant in terms of the interpretation of representations of memory, longing, and attachment to land in Palestinian narratives.

The other important aspect of the methodology is trauma theory. Cathy Caruth's research on trauma and memory is used to analyse the nature of emotional experiences in the texts chosen, as a result of violence and displacement (Caruth 4). Therapists who understand trauma will recognize the tendency for these things to come back to the person in pieces and in flashbacks, says Caruth. This framework is used to shed light on the role of emotional relation in Palestinian literature in the context of war, exile and historical loss.

Furthermore, the research draws on Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies outlined in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* to explore how emotions travel in a collective way

in oppressed communities (Ahmed 8). Ahmed's work is of particular significance with regards to the articulation of the importance of love, loss, hope and longing to collective identity and communal solidarity. In Palestinian discourses, emotions are not conveyed as singular experiences but as common social and political circumstances of a particular occupation and displacement.

The method also draws on feminist conflict theories, such as the theory on caregiving and emotional labour in war that was developed by Cynthia Enloe (Enloe 67). It is important to this perspective because both of the primary texts depict mothers, grandmothers, and women as being central to the maintenance of emotional continuity, cultural memory, and communal survival. The study thus focuses on the resistance of caregiving itself in political contexts of violence.

The research is qualitative because the main purpose of this research is interpretative literary analysis rather than statistical research. This study is based on textual evidence, thematic interpretation and theory application to build arguments. Quotes from the primary texts are used throughout the analysis to support and strengthen interpretations, while keeping a close connection to the texts being analysed. In-text citations and the Works Cited are based on MLA 9th edition guidelines.

In addition, the methodology acknowledges literature as a political and artistic medium of expression. The narratives of the Palestinian war are not treated as fictional or autobiographical stories, but as cultural artifacts that help to capture the historical memory, emotional experience, and collective identity. The study thus aims to consider the representation of the emotions as an important political gesture to defy the narratives of erasure and dehumanization of the colonial context.

A methodology that draws on postcolonial theory, trauma studies, affect theory, and feminist conflict analysis allows for a multidimensional analysis of love in Palestinian war

narratives. The interdisciplinary approach enables the study to transcend traditional readings that have been centered on violence and victimization, while exploring emotional relationships as mechanisms of resilience, resistance and survival.

Analysis

Familial Love as Emotional Resistance

They Called Me a Lioness and *Ever Since I Did Not Die* depict familial love as an essential means of emotional survival. The grandmother figure in Tamimi's memoir embodies warmth, memory and resistance. Tamimi writes,

“I loved Tata Farha dearly. She was kind and caring, and she always put everyone else’s needs before her own” (Tamimi and Takruri 17).

Violence of occupation is contrasted with emotional security of grandmother. In a setting of violence, anxiety, and political turmoil the grandmother serves as a place of emotional security and safety.

Farha's storytelling also reimagines the love of a family into cultural heritage. Tamimi says that her grandmother's tales

“taught us the history of our family, of the village, and of Palestine” (Tamimi and Takruri 17).

Family relations are thus the means by which inter-generational collective memory and political awareness is passed on. Oral stories help to safeguard Palestinian identity against systemic erasure. Aside from the emotional aspect, the grandmother is also a cultural archivist who resists the disappearance of history.

The significance of intergenerational memory can also be seen in Tamimi's depiction of family reunions and life at home. Ordinary things like telling stories, eating meals, sitting together take on political meanings during the occupation. The family house becomes a symbolic sanctuary, a place in which Palestinian identity lives on in the face of violence

outside. These portrayals highlight emotional connectedness, continuity, and resilience, and break away from the stereotypical portrayal of Palestinians as simply victims of conflict.

Tamimi also portrays her parents as influential figures in both the emotional and political sense. Her father's activism and her mother's strength mold her concept of resistance from an early age. Resistance is thus not just a political ideology but an emotional legacy that is passed on via the family relationship. Rising from familial love, courage and collective responsibility grow.

Likewise, the link between memory and family is repeated in Al-Asheq's text, which is also linked to displacement. He writes,

“They left houses heavy with memories” (Al-Asheq 6).

The house becomes a metaphor for emotional attachment, a place of being, a place of belonging, a place of exile and destruction being overcome. The term “heavy with memories” implies that memories are bound up within the physical environment. The house is not simply a building but a place of love, self-identity and historical experience.

Al-Asheq continues this emotional imagery with descriptions of families being split up and home spaces being destroyed. He mentions “pictures of a family that no longer exists” and “children without parents, mothers without wombs” (Al-Asheq 11:18).

This kind of imagery shows how awful war is to family life. But it is also a form of resistance to forgetting and dehumanizing these relationships when one is reminded of them.

Al-Asheq also alludes to refugee identity throughout as an emotional burden. The refugees are not only seen as political categories but as people who have emotional histories and family memories. Exile and the desire for family, home and belonging intertwine.

Additionally, in both texts there is often a merging of familial love and collective struggle. Families are not private units but actors of resistance movements and communal survival. Tamimi's memoir is a testament to the collective engagement of entire families in

protest, politics, and acts of resilience. Likewise, Al-Asheq describes displacement as a collective family and community tragedy, not a personal tragedy.

Mothers and grandmothers are especially emphasized in these stories. Women often become emotional anchors who carry the culture along during times of violence and displacement. During conflict, women's caregiving work is often ignored, but it is always necessary for communal survival, writes Cynthia Enloe (67). There is a strong emphasis on this in both texts as women are portrayed as being the holders of memory, emotional stability, and cultural identity.

These stories are about the love of family, extending beyond the personal to the political. Relationships within the family safeguard humanity in circumstances that aim to evoke fear and disintegration. Familial love then becomes an emotional response of resistance to occupation, displacement and dehumanization.

Love for Homeland

One of the most powerful emotions that come to light in both texts is love for homeland. The homeland is more than a geographical place, it is a place of emotion and symbolism that links to identity, belonging, memory and cultural continuity.

Tamimi reminisces about childhood memories of the spring at Ayn Al Qaws, where she and her cousins “my cousins and I would splash one another with its cool water” among “olive, fig, and citrus trees” (Tamimi and Takruri 18). The images create a Palestine that is an emotional space that is alive with warmth, innocence, and community. Memories and culture merge with nature.

Sensory details in Tamimi's story are particularly noteworthy because they help to create the sense of human attachment to land, which are particularly important to Palestinian narrative. Olive trees, water springs, and orchards are not nationalistic icons; they are a part of childhood and emotional memory. By these descriptions, Tamimi calls into question the

political narrative that has limited the Palestinian struggle to the territorial dimension. The homeland is linked to family, childhood, happiness, and continuity.

But when Israeli colonists occupy the spring, however, the emotional attachment becomes a political resistance. As the villagers march “to affirm our right to the land our families had owned for generations” (Tamimi and Takruri 19). Tamimi explains, they are demonstrating their entitlement to the land. Resistance to erasure and dispossession is therefore an extension of love for homeland. Soil protection is also a protection of memory, identity and emotional attachment.

Tamimi also presents the homeland as key to the process of identity formation. Repeated experience is not a reduction of emotional attachment, but an increase. While it is true that violence can reinforce cultural identity and historical continuity, this counterintuitively becomes greater when the violence is felt. Political rights are not the only reason for the villagers to protest; they also have a personal connection to the ancestral land.

Al-Asheq, likewise, depicts homeland in terms of memory, exile and longing. He writes, “They left the names themselves: Haifa, Jerusalem, Carmel” (Al-Asheq 6). The use of place names again and again is an effort to retain an emotional connectivity when displaced. Naming begins to be a way of remembering and resisting. Even if one cannot return physically, linguistic memory has the power to maintain the sense of "home".

The emotional impact of place names also illustrates the impact of exile on identity. The homeland lives on in language, memory and imagination. Al-Asheq depicts refugees as caught in an emotional limbo between their lives in their home and their homeland. This condition is defined by Homi Bhabha as an “unhomeliness”, where one feels “double-ness” and a sense of being home, but is not homeliness in any one place.

Al-Asheq also describes the refugee camps as emotional paradoxical spaces. He says, “The camp is necessary, sometimes, for remembering that the lands across the river dropped

off the face of the map when we weren't looking" (Al-Asheq 14). The refugee camp is a place of pain and a place of memory of the lost homeland. Even in exile, memory is able to hold onto emotional ties.

The homeland in both literary texts is thus not static or idealized. It is formed from desires, sorrows and wars. But, people still have feelings of belonging even in the face of displacement and destruction. The love of homeland turns to resistance against erasure of Palestinians because it demands the continued existence of Palestinian memory and identity.

In addition, both authors paint a picture of homeland attachment as being strongly communalistic. Land is not just being owned by individuals but by generations who share the land through their history and memories. This sense of collective emotion fosters solidarity and political resistance of the community.

These representations transform homeland from a place to a space of emotional memory of family, culture, identity, and survival. Love for Palestine is thus both personal and political in nature.

Romantic Love and Emotional Survival

In *Ever Since I Did Not Die*, romantic love is a way to survive the violence, exile and psychological disintegration. Al-Asheq's work contrasts with traditional romance stories which focus on stability and fulfillment as a central theme, in which love is portrayed as fragile, fleeting, and inextricably linked with displacement and trauma. But it is this intimate yet fragile bond that helps people maintain their humanity in dehumanizing circumstances. He writes that his lover cared for "this refugee who snatched back his wonder from the mouth of death after seeing her" (Al-Asheq 5). The poet uses the image of the mouth of death and the ability of love to make him or her feel again, to bring back hope and emotional sensitivity to life lived in fear and loss. The romantic love thus becomes psychologically nourishing.

Important to note that the refugee figure is represented, as a consequence of displacement, one may become emotionally numb and alienated. In those situations, intimacy is a gesture of defiance against emotional breakdown. By offering the refugee the opportunity to experience beauty, tenderness, and vulnerability, Love brings back these qualities in a world of war and exile. From the moment he did not die, he began to savor beauty. Al-Asheq further writes, “Ever since I did not die he started to taste beauty” (Al-Asheq 6). Human contact gives emotional value to the act of survival. When violence is experienced over a long duration, beauty and affection are forms of recovery.

Desire is another frequent emotional state in the book, too. Al-Asheq says that longing is “the sound of missing someone” (Al-Asheq 5). This definition turns longing into something like a sound, and into something that is even physically tangible. Seeking to escape the pain of separation simultaneously sustains emotional attachment. Longing is a state of exile that is a constant presence where people keep in touch with people they love, their homeland and memories. Remember, emotional desire does not die down at the hands of violence, it spreads.

Al-Asheq's poetic language is frequently used to equate love with its lack and incompleteness. The beloved becomes elusive, out of reach, perchance, as life under displacement is precarious. But this lack of completeness is no less important the nature of love. Rather, it shines a light on the love that endures through lack of coherence. Love is meaningful just because it lasts in the face of impossibilities.

Emotional vulnerability can also be found in Al-Asheq's work, which stands in opposition to the dominant masculinist narratives of the war literature, which emphasize heroism, aggression, and political militancy. The text does not celebrate violence, it foregrounds tenderness, grief, longing and emotional dependence. These are representations that humanise the refugee, beyond a political classification, and that show the personal emotional impact of displacement.

They Called Me a Lioness is more about relationships within the family and the community, but a few moments of teenage love show how commonplace emotions can be neglected in conflict stories. Neymar herself, in her own words, is “my first official crush” (Tamimi and Takruri 16), and admits to being “completely obsessed” with him. Although perhaps frivolous, these moments have a deeper meaning, as they reveal Palestinian youth as emotional but not necessarily conflicted people.

Admiring Neymar is only a reflection of the universal nature of adolescent feelings, even in militarized settings, as was Tamimi's case. Her playfulness is disruptive of the prevailing mood of the memoir, which is one of raids, protests and occupation. What Tamimi has done is to make these elements part of a globalized media image, thus reclaiming what is often withheld from Palestinian children: the youth. Overall the memoir proves that Palestinian teens experience feelings of admiration, excitement, embarrassment, and emotional attachment just like youth anywhere else.

Emotional continuity under instability can then be seen as a romantic love in both texts. Love offers psychological respite in times of war. Relationships, when they are missing, absent or incomplete, remain emotionally human and vulnerable.

Furthermore, romantic love in these stories is not limited to the private sphere but given political meaning. Colonial violence and colonial displacement is an attempt to control not just physical space, but emotional lives and interpersonal relations. The characters continue to love, desire and emotionally bond, thereby challenging the systems that aim to instill fear, numbness, and alienation in them. Love is an act of subtle survival.

Communal Solidarity and Collective Care

The theme of communal solidarity is another important theme in both texts. The Palestinian war stories do not typically depict survival as a personal journey; rather, it requires

communal nourishment, comfort and resistance. Communities are places where emotional resilience is fostered, in the face of military domination, displacement, and violence.

In Tamimi's memoir, communal solidarity is found in the day-to-day practices of cooperation and resistance. She describes how Palestinian communities “banded together to protect themselves from the soldiers, feed one another during the curfews, and educate their children in underground schools” (Tamimi and Takruri 20). These gestures of communal care make it clear that there are other ways to resist than protest and political slogan. Offering food, education, shelter and emotional support can also become acts of resistance to occupation and fragmentation.

“The banded together” reminds us of the communal nature of the Palestinian existence. In the context of military occupation, common life becomes political as communal unity directly confronts systems of isolation and weakening of communities. So emotional solidarity becomes imperative for the purpose of maintaining dignity and hope.

The community love that was expressed in Nabi Saleh was yet another example of how it could become political action. Tamimi explains that “men, women, and children alike” participated in resistance marches (Tamimi and Takruri 19). Palestinian resistance is very communal, with entire families joining in protests. Resistance is not shown as a duty of individual political activists, but as being based on an emotional sense of attachment to land, history and identity of people.

Collective participation is also part of the lessons to be learned from Tamimi in reducing fear and building emotional strength. Children live in a context of collective awareness and collective taking care. The village is more like a family, and everyone suffers, is responsible, and is resilient.

Likewise, Al-Asheq depicts refugeehood as highly communal. He writes, “Only blood keeps us together” (Al-Asheq 18). This is a reflection of the depth of tragedy and loss that is

inherent in violence, but also the emotional connection that can result when people share their experiences of displacement. Refugeehood is transformed from a personal state to an emotional state that is collective, one that is filled with memory, for the loss of a sense of home, and for the experience of survival.

Al-Asheq repeatedly represents refugee camps and displaced communities as places of emotional connections. He writes, “The refugee is not alone even in his loneliness” (Al-Asheq 15). This paradoxical statement implies that when groups of people suffer together there is a common awareness of that suffering among the people. Even isolation is a joint experience, for refugees share the same sense of loss, exile, and longing.

Storytelling and the remembrance of common acts of kindness also play a role in communal solidarity in both texts. Village narratives, family histories, movements and memories of displacement and resistance are linked together and are remembered. Memory is thus shared, not personal. Palestinians are able to resist erasure and have historical consciousness by telling stories.

Communal care is well represented and resonates with Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies which posits that emotions move socially and play a part in the formation of collective identity (Ahmed 8). In both texts, feelings like grief, love, anger and hope flow together within families and communities, consolidating people's unity against oppression.

Also, communal solidarity poses a challenge to colonialism's depiction of Palestinians as divided or dehumanized communities. However, Tamimi and Al-Asheq place central focus on the custodianship, collaboration and emotional mutual dependence, highlighting the Palestinian humanity and community's resilience. Community is a form of resistance; it sustains social relations in spaces built around violence and displacement.

What both texts show is that, while political resistance is a crucial means of survival under occupation and exile, so is emotional connectedness. Collective care, shared memory,

and communal solidarity helps Palestinians maintain dignity, humanity, and hope in the face of ongoing violence and dispossession.

Conclusion

Narratives of war in contemporary Palestine go beyond scenes of violence and displacement and the politics of conflict. Themes of trauma and suffering are still at the heart of Palestinian literary expression, but *They Called Me a Lioness* and *Ever Since I Did Not Die* confirm that emotional life – love, care, memory, and human connection – are also central to Palestinian life under occupation and exile. Both texts show how emotions can function as a tool to survive and resist in the context of violence and dispossession, as well as a way to express family love, romantic longing, community togetherness, and homeland.

The study shows familial love as a strong emotional strength in both narratives. Grandmothers, parents, and family members do not just come out as caregivers, but as guardians of memory, cultural continuity, and political consciousness. The memoir recounts how Tata Farha's narrative of his family's history and identity is preserved in Tamimi's household, a space of resistance. Likewise, in his thoughts on homes, broken families and memories, Al-Asheq is interested in the nature of familial attachment in the face of displacement and exile. These representations disrupt colonial and militarized narratives that marginalize, dehumanize and/or politicize Palestinians by foregrounding their inter-personal relationships and intimate emotional lives.

It also shows that the concept of love for homeland is an emotionally charged and symbolic concept in Palestinian literature. Homeland is not just a place, it's a living repository of memory, belonging, identity and collective history. Springs, olive trees, villages, and city names are all symbols of loss and identity that evoke emotional responses and a connection to a place facing occupation and erasure for Palestinians. The sense of “unhomeliness” such as Homi Bhabha describes, in which displaced people continue to feel attached to a place that is

not where they are physically, is evident in both texts. The homeland lives on in Palestinian memory, through stories and through the desire for it.

Romantic love and longing also show the sense of a human will to endure in an environment that is violent and uncertain. Romantic love provides emotional sustenance and psychological recovery in Al-Asheq's work especially. Love is used to recover tenderness, vulnerability and hope in the context of displacement and death. Even Tamimi's talk of youthful admiration and emotional attachment add to the humanization of Palestinian experience, where she portrays the normal emotional realities that are not seen in most depictions of conflict zones.

The study also emphasizes the importance of solidarity and mutual care among Palestinian communities. Both texts evoke a sense of emotional support, caregiving, and mutual resistance as types of survival during occupation. Palestinian communities are represented as networks of emotional resilience in which mutual suffering serves to bind communities together, not tear them apart. The theory of affective economies by Sara Ahmed offers insight into how emotions like grief, hope, love and anger can move together and play a role in the formation of collective identity (Ahmed 8). These stories are about solidarity as resistance to fragmentation and dehumanization.

Moreover, this study illustrates how love in the Palestinian war narratives is intrinsically political. Emotional attachment, caregiving, storytelling and remembrance defies a system of colonial violence that attempts to erase Palestinian humanity and history. In the intimate emotional encounters, both Tamimi and Al-Asheq challenge the dominant narratives that represent the Palestinian people solely as suffering, as militant or as victims. Rather, they regain their emotional complexity, individuality and dignity.

Applying postcolonial theory, trauma studies, affect theory and feminist conflict analysis, this study adds to the wider critical understanding of Palestinian literature that has

tended to focus on trauma readings. This paper builds on the emphasis in previous scholarship on exile, violence and political resistance to highlight the importance of emotional resilience and human connection to Palestinian experiences of survival. Love does not come from a flight from conflict but from a dynamic that sustains identity, keeps remembrances alive and provides resistance.

Ultimately, they both show that humanity can still survive through the emotional bond, even in an occupied, exiled, and war-torn world. Family bonds, love, friendship, social unity and loyalty to the homeland turn into a resistance to violence and erasure. Thus, Palestinian literature states that resistance is not just political, but it is also remembered, cared for, narrated, and loved.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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