Trauma, Memory and Identity Crisis

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Reimagining and Rewriting the Past

Edited by

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Zohair Rubaiyat Abdullah
for his ability to surprise me each and every moment

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INTRODUCTION

THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF TRAUMA FROM A MARGINALIZED STANDPOINT: REINVENTING THE PAST AND CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY

MD ABU SHAHID ABDULLAH

Trauma is a universal phenomenon pervading the minds of individuals to varying extents. It can be individual, cultural, communal or transgenerational. Victims of trauma want to forget the traumatic event(s) they have been through and thus suffer from a distorted sense of memory and identity crisis which can ultimately develop into amnesia or an identity crisis on a collective level. However, the truth is that we cannot ignore or forget our past even if we want to; rather, we should have the courage to remember it properly. It is by reimagining and rewriting the past that we can come to terms with trauma and (re)form our identity. The intertwined relationship between history (the study of past events) and memory (the ways of remembering and accessing the past) has been a major issue of scholarly discussion. However, scholars in recent years have focused more on how catastrophic events – colonisation, slavery, war, genocide, sexual violence, acts of political and religious violence, forced migration/exile, natural disasters, pollution, disease, pandemics and such – have an impact on memory, and how traumatic events are remembered by victims, survivors and descendants. The language of trauma has been called upon to speak of past wounds in the constant demand for recognition, compensation and justice. Victims, survivors and witnesses of traumatic events and those who feel they have somehow been affected by the events, have the urge to write and talk about trauma. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (2020) opine:

> Moreover, legacies of violence that are traumatizing for those affected by them also concern those who are not directly affected. They raise issues of collective responsibility, such as the question of how to make sure that past atrocities are not repeated in the present and future and how to address the mechanisms of structural violence that we have inherited from the past and that we may be perpetuating in the present. (1)

The variety of narrative forms capable of dealing with trauma, memory and identity include, but are not limited to, memoir, testimonial fiction, slave narratives, war novels, science fiction, postmodern fantasy, alternative history, historical novels, utopian and dystopian fiction, and magical realism.

Trauma, which refers to psychological or emotional wounds and long-term damage done by disastrous, painful events on both individual and collective levels, has nowadays become a complex standard for penetrating history, literature and culture. As Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo (2014) write, "[…] the increasing interest in trauma was a response to concerns about memory, politics, representation and ethics that became prominent at the turn of the twentieth century, and which have mainly focused on the extreme forms of violence and victimisation that came to light after World War II" (1). The rising interest in trauma and the boom of trauma theory has given novelists the opportunity to conceptualize or theorize trauma "and has shifted attention away from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered" (Whitehead 2004, 3). As many theorists have mentioned, "ours appears to be the age of trauma" (Miller and Tougaw 2001, 1), a "catastrophic age" (Caruth 1995, 11), marked by the ubiquitous suffering on both collective and individual levels. The modern world or modernity itself is characterized by the "sign of the wound" and "the modern subject has become inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma" (qtd. in Luckhurst 2008, 20). Trauma, which is considered an "all-inclusive" occurrence (Caruth 1995, 4), also creates a mesmerizing cultural model because, as Roger Luckhurst (2008) points out, "it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood that have saturated Western cultural life" (80).

Unlike ordinary memory, traumatic memory takes place by a process that Janet terms "restitutio ad integrum", that is, "when one element of a traumatic experience is evoked, all other elements follow automatically"

(qtd. in Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, 163). It thus demonstrates the inter-connectedness of traumatic elements in a traumatic event. Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler (1995) state that "traumatic memories may be encoded differently than memories for ordinary events, perhaps via alterations in attentional focusing, perhaps because of extreme emotional arousal interferes with hippocampal memory functions" (508–09). Since traumatic memory is detached from consciousness, it forces the victim of trauma to re-experience or to re-examine the catastrophic event as long as the victim has satisfactory control over the event and unless and until the traumatic memory can be converted into narrative memory. Abdullah (2020) surmises Ruth Leys' act of differentiating traumatic memory from narrative memory by saying, "narrative memory narrates past events in a linear, chronological way so that it can give them new meanings. Traumatic memory, on the contrary, repeats the traumatic experiences without realising the significance of those events" (15). Although memory is normally considered to be individual, individual memory is conceived to be derived from collective memory which has the ability to unite isolated individuals, to provide them a collective consciousness and to find the individual narrative in the collective narrative. As Ron Eyerman (2019) states:

> Collective memory unifies the group through time and over space by providing a narrative frame, a collective story, which locates the individual and his and her biography within it, and which, because it can be represented as narrative and as text, attains mobility. The narrative can travel, as individuals travel, and it can be embodied, written down, painted, represented, communicated, and received in distant places by isolated individuals who can thereby be united culturally, if not physically, with the collective (25).

The process of estranged individuals being united with the collective connects collective memory with the formation of collective identity.

According to Berliner and Briere (1999), in some cases, survivors of traumatic events seem to forget substantial aspects of their experiences which include being ill-treated, seeing disfigured bodies and witnessing murder (5). Since they sometimes forget key aspects of their experiences, their testimonies or narratives become inconsistent. Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler (1995) divided the impact of trauma on memory into: "traumatic

amnesia" which talks about the loss of memories involved with traumatic experiences (509); "global memory impairment" which makes it very complex for victims to create an exact account of their history, both past and present (510); "trauma and dissociation" which refers to the fragmentary aspect of memories (510); and "the sensorimotor organization of traumatic experience" which states that trauma is organized into memory on sensorimotor and affective levels (512). As Abdullah (2020) says, "since the content of traumatic memory is fragmented, trauma narratives cannot be consistent and linear" (16).

Trauma suggests forgetting and repetition. Freud (1959) states that a trauma victim "reproduces [forgotten and repressed events] not in memory but in his behaviour; he repeats it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it" (369). According to Caruth (1995), it is the "insistent return [of the traumatic event] which thus constitutes trauma and points towards its enigmatic core" (5). In "After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History" (2014), Caruth highlights the traumatic return:

> Trauma, and ultimately life and the drive itself, is an attempt to return that instead departs. This figure, this concept, this story – the story also, we recall, of the child who plays "fort/da" with his reel – is about memory and history, and it is also the concept archiving its own history, as it returns, and departs, from its origins. (22)

Just like repetition, the resistance to representation is also a crucial problem and/or a feature of trauma. Jacques Lacan (1981) argues that if trauma is "a missed encounter with the Real" (50), and the Real fights symbolization – "the Real doesn't stop not being written" (Lacan 1998, 59) – trauma creates the world of the unspeakable and the unrepresentable. The inaccessibility and the irrepresentability of trauma highlights its connection with history as pointed out by Douglass and Vogler (2003):

> [T]he traumatic event […] is that which cannot be anticipated or reproduced. It thus allows a return to the real without the discredited notions of transparent referentiality often found in traditional modes of historical discourse. This combination of the simultaneous undeniable reality of the traumatic event with its unapproachability offers the possibility for a

> seeming reconciliation between the undecidable text and the ontological status of the traumatic event as an absolute signified. (5)

If the representation of trauma or traumatic events involves insufficiency or incompleteness, there is a high risk of trivializing trauma or the real historical event. Michael Roth (2012) notes:

> Banalization of a trauma through narrative pleasure […] threatens recovery, normality. … In so far as […] representation is tied to narrative, the quality that makes an experience traumatic (that we cannot take it in through the mental schemes available to us) is lost in the telling. This loss can be felt as a cure; and it can be felt as a betrayal, a sacrilege, or a renewed act of violence. (83)

Again, the representation of trauma also suggests transformation and to some extent the notion of forgetting as Roth (2012) says again:

> [T]here is no way to defeat the forgetting that comes with the recovery from trauma, and the most powerful and subtle forms of forgetting are narrative memory and history. Narrative memory, which is at the core of historical representation on paper or on film, *transforms* the past as a condition of retaining it. (85)

However, it is essential that traumatic events are narrated and discussed in suitable and effective platforms since silence over the events will cause repression and ultimate forgetting. As Abdullah (2020) opines, "It is essential for trauma victims to confront and thus remember their traumatic events, to share them with others, and to transform them into narratives so that they can regain control over their experiences and initiate the healing process" (17). Dominick LaCapra (2001) opines that in spite of unalterable losses, "the literary (or even art in general) is a prime, if not the privileged, place for giving voice to trauma as well as symbolically exploring the role of excess" (190). Martina Kopf (2010) explains, "[A]ctive listening and witnessing are of as much importance as the act of narrating itself. […] it is also significant for the reception of literature and art that deal with traumatic experience, as well as for acknowledging their specific contribution to the integration and transformation of traumatic memory" (43). It is, therefore, crucial that traumatic experiences are not only recounted but also listened to and acknowledged by others. Dori Laub (1992) states, "[…] if one talks

about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the trauma – a re-experiencing of the event itself" (67). Kopf (2010) states again, "[L]iterature and art contribute to the social recognition of personal suffering and traumatic reality" (56). They are, therefore, ideal fields for the re-establishment and formation of personal and collective identity (56). Regarding the literary representation of trauma and its association with healing and collectiveness, Abdullah (2020) opines, "Literary representation of trauma may do the healing but may also establish a notion that trauma is collective. In other words, collectiveness comes from literary representation because of the involvement of the group of readers" (18). Abdullah (2020) again says:

> Trauma, loneliness, contempt and hatred suffered by a survivor [and/or a traumatised person] can be healed when the reader reads a trauma narrative and empathises with that survivor [and/or that traumatised person]. He is not isolated, weak and alone anymore; rather he acquires the magical feelings of becoming the member of a group of people. (18)

Victims and survivors of traumatic events are often either unwilling or unable to talk about those events because of the brutalities they entail and the lack of a suitable narrative. Expressing traumatic events in literature requires political awareness and, according to Arva (2011), empathy, responsibility and the courage to face what is left uncaptured by reason and logic and what official history and public discourses have considered an unsuitable issue (22). Abdullah (2020) suggests that, "[I]n dealing with those issues, writers have to swim against the stream of logic and explore something beyond common perception. In other words, they need to think outside the box" (8). The language or narrative of trauma victims, which creates an alternative history by rewriting the official history from a marginalized standpoint and thus can be considered a social, cultural and political protest, is able to turn an intangible experience into an apprehensible event, unearth hidden reality and make the silence heard. With its subversive and transgressive qualities, trauma narrative gives a voice to the traumatized and thus provides them a platform to unleash their innermost feelings concerning their traumatization and a sense of relief for them.

This edited book includes eleven essays and is organized into four parts: Part I: Displacement, History and Memory: Reimagining and Rewriting the Past; Part II: Ethnic, Racial and Gendered Marginalization: Cultural Invasion and Assertion of Identity; Part III: Personal Loss, Trauma and Identity Formation; and Part IV: Political Violence and Prison Torture: Survival and Reconciliation. Part I deals with the notion of individual and collective displacement and the urge to be back to the motherland, and the attempts to reinvent the past through the use of memory. The first of the three essays in this part, "Tearing Down the Walls of Separation: Recovering Trauma and Memory of Exile in Sandy Tolan's *The Lemon Tree*" by Seher Özsert, illustrates how the memories of Palestinians and Israelis build an invisible barrier between the two nations, how the loss of the idealized homeland and the following trauma cause both nations to accuse 'the Other' for their own miseries, and how, despite these, they seek hope to get out of the suffering of exile. The essay analyses how the prejudice towards 'the Other' builds a hatred wall by hindering the dialogue of the two nations, which is supported by the trauma of losing the homeland and its idealization. Özsert's essay also demonstrates how the displacement of the main characters in the novel is represented by the symbolism of the lemon tree and the wall. Nevertheless, the optimism for peaceful future coexistence is given with the solution of tearing down all the walls by creating a common ground of union to erase the traces of difference. Touhid Ahmed Chowdhury's essay "Narratives of History and Memory: Reimagining and Rewriting the Past in Aleksandar Hemon's *The Question of Bruno*" emphasizes the interplay between memory and history in the analysed short story collection of Aleksandar Hemon which abounds with instances of recollection and reimagining events from the past. Chowdhury observes that whether it is the infamous assassination of Archduke Ferdinand on a street in Sarajevo in 1914 or a wartime journalist's hideout during the Bosnian War, stories in *The Question of Bruno* narrate them from the narrator's memories and recollections of the family history. He argues that history and memory blend into a unique narrative in the book which then provides the platform for the narrator of the stories to reimagine and rewrite the past. Chowdhury also argues that by underlining the interchangeability, and indicating the similarity or the concurrence, between history and fiction, Hemon demonstrates to the reader that the space

between these two realms decides both our personal and communal identity. In the third essay of the section, "Engagement with the 'Other' in Martin Amis's 'The Last Days of Muhammad Atta'", Fikret Güven shows how the story takes its inspiration from the 'clash of civilization' theory, in which the East and the West are perceived as antagonistic to each other because of their inherent differences. The supporters of the new clash represent the rise of political Islam and its opposition to Western domination of the third world as evidence of a deep and inherent hatred of the West. Güven analyses how Amis's narrative is connected to a constructed representation, which is then set in opposition to the Western 'self'. Individual actions of the fictional perpetrator are construed as motivated by an ideology and explained in psychoanalytical approaches, which is inhuman and barbaric. Through these methods, 'the Other' is moulded into a menacing entity with beast-like qualities as definitive characteristics.

The second part of the anthology which includes three essays and analyses cultural encroachment, various types of marginalization and the (in)ability to (re)assert identity begins with Md Ishrat Ibne Ismail and Anik Biswas's essay "A Study of Trauma in Adwaita Mallabarman's *A River Called Titash*". This paper explores trauma and its multidimensional manifestations in the analysed text, exposing different levels of injury, shock and violence in which a fishing community's livelihood presents the survival crisis in a panic-stricken world following their cultural heritage. The essay argues that the novel deserves significant attention in the field of trauma because it deals with external elements of pain including personal, social and cultural violence, the concept of alienation, and memory of shock. Through the help of different external and internal factors, Ismail and Biswas reveal the cultural demise of the Malo community which leaves little chance for the survivors to recover from the trauma and to rebuild their individual and cultural identity. Md Abu Shahid Abdullah's "Asserting Identity and Establishing Alternative Mode(s) of Speaking: Slavery and the Search for Female Freedom in Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*" shows the way the act of reclaiming black women's artistic and political subjectivity is interwoven with unresolved domestic tensions. It demonstrates how Shange attempts to give black women a voice through spirituality, to establish alternative mode(s) of storytelling and to reconstruct history from

a marginalized (here, female) standpoint where creating and living in an alternative reality has enabled Indigo to overthrow the dominant social order. Abdullah argues that by emphasizing the lives of black women, Shange demonstrates the way art – music, dance and weaving – plays a significant role in female emancipation and self-expression, particularly the ways music works as a unifying factor among black people. Abdullah also argues that Shange shows the black slaves' connection with spirituality as a way of seeking solace for their suffering and escaping their bitter lives. The last essay of the second part, "A Study of Abject Masculinity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye" by Ms Sharifa Akter* attempts to critique the abject masculine subject portrayed in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye,* showing how black people are marginalized and forever searching for something to fill the void in their lives that forms their struggle for identity. Akter believes that several abject signifiers like death, vomit, dirt, incestuous relationships and paedophilic impulses contradict the known narratives regarding masculine images of the patriarchal society. In order to deconstruct the cultural perversion of African American ethnicity, Akter's analysis of abject male subjectivity evocatively promises a profound insight into the construction of identity, the operation of language, the meaning of negative emotions, and the denial and oppression of outsiders. Morrison places these abject masculine characters as potentially dangerous with the potential to overturn the moral values of a society.

The third part of the anthology consists of three essays and focuses on the notion of individual trauma, identity disruption or crisis, and eventual self-discovery, starting with Shibly Azad's "Reality as Enacting Fantasy in the Wake of Personal Trauma: The Case of a Twisted Reality in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*". Azad claims that the fact the novel *Fun Home* draws extensively on retrospective self-reflection in which borders between intertextuality, intratextuality and hypotextuality converge, giving the supposed memoir an aura of a creative piece rather than a minute autobiographical account. Offering a close reading of the text through the lens of reception theory, as articulated by Wolfgang Iser in particular, this paper attempts to discern the encased actuality, contrasting with the narrator's perceived truth and contends that the results is a coalescence, as the narrator makes herself a synecdoche of her late father. It further contends

that much of the trauma that Alison Bechdel supposedly experienced at the burgeoning stage of her developing lesbian identity is rooted in the projections that she later makes; that she conflates her identity with that of her deceased father, evinced in her fetishizing the susceptible power of the act of reading upon a fragile soul, and that she enacts a fantasy that she constructed rather than actually lived out. The text consequently, this paper claims, could be read more as a convoluted trajectory of Alison Bechdel's self-discovery as a lesbian than as an authentic autobiography. The notion of individual loss and the formation of individual identity is continued in Petr Chalupský's essay "Loss, Memory and Writing in Graham Swift's *Mothering Sunday*". Chalupský shows how *Mothering Sunday* mostly concerns the loss of a beloved person – a spouse, a parent, a child, a friend – either actual or metaphorical, and the narrative revolves around someone who was affected by this loss and cannot therefore help but recall it as they are constantly troubled by intrusive memories of what preceded and followed this incident. He argues that these characters, who simultaneously tend to be the narrators, thus keep returning in their minds to certain past events which crucially determined their subsequent lives. Some of these events are truly traumatic while others "merely" unpleasant and unsettling, yet in all cases they allow the narration to explore the intricate and whimsical nature and working of human memory, including the employment of diverse coping mechanisms and strategies that such individuals resort to in order to cope with the pangs of their disturbed psyche. This chapter also attempts to demonstrate the thematic triad of loss, memory and coping mechanisms as depicted in the novel. Unlike the previous two essays which involve white protagonists, the third and last essay of the second part, "Beyond Margin: Reviewing Toni Morrison's Sula as a 'New Woman'" by Keya Chakraborty, investigates the fictional migrant journey of Sula who is not white or does not belong to the native community in the West. Chakraborty's essay sheds light on how Sula struggles to create a place of her own in a land where it has become quite challenging to survive. In the process of exploring and reconstructing her own identity, Sula deconstructs the structurally biased notions about gender, particularly for women. In addition, this chapter highlights the complexities involved in the psychological development of Sula living in a patriarchal society that denies her existence. The paper also underscores the way

Morrison mirrors the indeterminate and disconcerting effects of race on women, leaving them socially and culturally marginalized.

The fourth and final part of the anthology, which includes two essays and deals with the atrocities under dictatorships and political regimes, and highlights issues such as survival and giving a voice to the voiceless, starts with Ibrahim Sayed Fawzy's "Reviving Painful Memories: Trauma, Torture and Aesthetics in Selected Women's Prison Memoirs". In his essay, Fawzy investigates the way Malika Oufkir's *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail* and Alicia Kozameh's *Steps under Water* offer new forms for the exploration of agency, trauma and torture, the impossibility of narrating life in captivity, and other ways in which violence is remembered. The essay focuses on the work of memory in the selected texts and contends that the memoir not only disrupts taboos on the narration of prison and torture but also addresses broader anxieties over women's resistance, subjectivity and the right to represent their memory in the form of memoir. The essay emphasizes that although the female political prisoners experience a gendered trauma and are crushed and oppressed, they employ various survival strategies and defence mechanisms to maintain their sanity behind the prison walls. Fawzy also shows the way both Oufkir and Kozameh provide the voiceless female political prisoners a voice and give them scope to reveal the atrocities of the dominant regime. The final essay of the collection, "Surviving Crises and Imagining Utopia in Han Kang's *Human Acts*" by Md Abu Shahid Abdullah and Tanvir Mustafiz Khan, interprets the narrative depiction of crises in Han Kang's *Human Acts* which portrays the characters' struggle against dictatorship. It attempts to compare and contrast Hang Kim's interviews of the Gwangju survivors who withstood the brutality of the torture during and after the uprising yet refused to give up fighting with the characters' sufferings in *Human Acts* to analyse the manner of the crises portrayed in the novel and to critically interpret the characters' individual and collective responses to the crises. Based on the theoretical frameworks of 'apocalyptic fiction' by Frank Kermode and 'state control' by Louis Althusser, this paper also argues that, after the initial apocalyptic scenario, consecutive crises in the novel occur because of the binary conflict or contrasting ideas among individuals or groups. It analyses how Han's stream of consciousness narrative portrays the characters'

suppression and recollection of memories both as a means to cope with their trauma and to redeem their identities. The essay also interprets *Human Acts* as an allegorical commemoration of the Gwangju Uprising and observes whether it takes a narrative shift to a utopian tone to remain true to the historical aftermath of the uprising.

By dealing with various traumatic events, the essays in this collection attempt to show the impact of trauma on the victims' memory and identity on both individual and collective levels. The essays are written from varying social, cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds, foregrounding the suffering of the marginalized and thus giving them a narrative, a voice. They show the way the victims of trauma confront the past; instead of running away from it they share their stories with others and thus (re)assert their shattered identity. They also show the way (trauma) narratives can enable the traumatized to challenge official history and to come up with an alternative version of that history. Put another way, trauma narratives provide the victims and the survivors the opportunity to reimagine, to reinvent and to rewrite the past in order to secure a peaceful future, and help them find a place in history.

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PART I

DISPLACEMENT, HISTORY AND MEMORY: REIMAGINING AND REWRITING THE PAST

CHAPTER 1

TEARING DOWN THE WALLS OF SEPARATION: RECOVERING TRAUMA AND MEMORY OF EXILE IN SANDY TOLAN'S *THE LEMON TREE*

SEHER ÖZSERT

The issue of exile is an inescapable situation for many, whether experiencing it psychologically or physically by leaving or being forced to leave the accepted homeland. John D. Barbour (2007) describes exile as "banishment", meaning a compulsory migration of a nation from its native land. Exile is the situation of imagined and real displacement. The exiled people suffer in a land far away from their homes and they have a strong wish one day to return. On the other hand, the imagined displacement is mostly caused by memories of people who do not leave their lands but feel lost. Barbour (2007) associates exile with "a difficult journey" for the person who is "lost" in a place away from home, in mourning and trying to rid themselves of this homesickness by reuniting with their roots (293–94). John Durham Peters (1999) describes this journey of separation from the motherland as a reminder of the first journey dating back to the first man from Heaven to earth or all human beings from the womb to the world. Peters (1999) emphasizes this observation by connecting exile to the "original place" and adds that the Book of Genesis opens with, "In the beginning there was exile" (17). He asserts, therefore, that human life started as an exile: "Those in exile did not choose to lose their homes and homelands; mourning is not their fault but a fate" (34).

Edward W. Said (2000) gives an explanation of exile's origin: "Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you" (184). According to Said (1999), exile means feeling oneself in more than one

place and thing. This situation gives one a feeling of uneasiness by affecting one's life and consciousness. Said calls the situation "being not quite right and out of place" (295). Exile is not only a sense of loss, but it includes many more traumatic experiences: "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is an unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (Said 2000, 173).

The restlessness of exiled societies caused by displacement is the reason for creating the unwanted 'Other'. Homi K. Bhabha (1990) illustrates the point: "The 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (4). The loss of homeland and the others responsible for this are forces dragging the exiled people into the traumas of displacement.

The most visible effect driving Palestinians and Israelis into this displacement is their past, which is imagined to be full of good memories. As their lives have changed in a way they do not wish, they hold on to their memories. There is no possibility of reaching the homeland and the memories of it that they have created in their dreams; so, they imagine the best ones. The inaccessibility of this idealized past and homeland becomes a barrier between Palestinians and Israelis because they think that their unhappiness is the Other's fault. There exists, therefore, a lack of communication and understanding between the two nations. This gap makes them unable to build good relationships with each other as neighbours or friends; it even results in them nourishing hatred against each other.

Again, they justify this enmity by their memories. They want to live in the place they accept as their homeland and try to do anything they can to obtain it. All the memories of the homeland are sweet for them, but when they harm others in order to live on it again, it becomes a bitter experience. The same land both Palestinians and Israelis claim is full of sour sweet memories of exile. The novel *The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolan (2008) describes this situation from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives. The story of the novel illustrates that the happy memories of the past before the existence of the Other and the trauma caused by being far away from the idealized

paradise of homeland hinder the dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis by bringing them both into imagined and real exiles. Those beautiful memories of the idealized past ruin the characters' lives and force them to blame the Other, which drives away the possibility of realizing the similar memories as they are just fantasies created by the exiled people to have a reason to hold on to their lives.

'The Other' as a Scapegoat

Bhabha (1999) describes the attitudes of nations towards each other within the diaspora as a situation in which,

> [N]ationalist awareness and authority has been brutally asserted on the principle of the displaceable presence of 'others' who are either perceived as premodern and therefore underserving of nationhood, or basically labelled 'terroristic' and therefore deemed unworthy of a national home, enemies of the very idea of a national peoples (x).

In human life, the existence of the Other is inescapable in every society. In a multicultural society, as Bhabha notes, the problem is the negative point of view, even reaching hostility by labelling the other nation with accusing expressions and attitudes. These prejudices and sometimes approaches bearing superiority over the other are huge obstacles hindering the dialogue and coexistence on a multicultural land. *The Lemon Tree* is an example of this demanding struggle of two nations, Palestinians and Israelis, on the same land. The negotiation of differences causes problems in this society as Bhabha (1994) analyses further: "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (3). Both nations have justice on their sides, there is not a totally guilty side, but the happiness of one means the misery of the Other. They have many common things that meet on the border of their own wishes, which is shown throughout the book in the perspectives of both Palestinians and Israelis (Pressman 2008, 440). This situation of Palestinians and Israelis is analysed by Said (2008) in his study of Orientalism; Jewish and Arab societies have had similar experiences when their histories are examined: "That anti-Semitism and Orientalism resemble

each other very closely is a historical, cultural, and political truth that needs only to be mentioned to an Arab Palestinian for its irony to be perfectly understood" (27–28). Jews escape from their exile and death, where they were the Other, and they start a new life in Palestine by making another nation the Other and putting them into the same diaspora they have experienced.

In the book, Bashir Al-Khayri and Dalia Ashkenazi Landau are in-between individuals of this diaspora. Bashir is the son of a Palestinian family exiled by the coming Israelis who escape death in Europe and Dalia is a daughter of a family that settles down in the empty house abandoned by Bashir's family. The idea of their happiness depends on the understanding of each side; if one side welcomes the Other, then celebration of hybrid life on a unique land becomes possible. When Bashir and his friends stand in front of the door, when they come to see their old houses now owned by Israeli families, they know that their wish is up to the Other: "Everything depended on the reception, Bashir told himself. … 'It depends,' he said, 'who is on the other side of the door'" (Tolan 2008, 30). Even though Bashir and his company have an exile life divided with a border, they want to pass this border and reach their homeland. No matter how much they want to see their homes, their wishes depend on the current owner of their houses. It is fortunate for Bashir that Dalia is the person behind the door of their old house, even she welcomes them with relieving words, "You are welcome. Come in, feel at home" (225). Dalia is such a thoughtful host, however, these expressions are also ironic for Bashir, "It was a universal welcome – Make yourself at home – yet these particular words seemed especially strange to Bashir as he approached the front door: Feel at home" (225). Bashir is glad for such a welcome, but still he feels that there is something wrong in this welcome, as his family owned the house for many years.

Dalia is one of the unique characters overcoming the obstacles of communication between two nations by welcoming an Arab to her house and being a friend to him. Bashir's friend Yasser wants to see his own house, but he is not as lucky as Bashir. All they want is to see their old houses, but, very different from Dalia's attitude, the woman who owns Yasser's house screams, "If you don't leave the house, I will call the police!" (29). This woman is shown as an example of intolerance to the Other. She might

remember her suffering in the past and her anger is caused by the fear of losing her house. She, therefore, chooses to escape from the reality that her house was once the property of another family.

In hybrid cultures, meeting the conflicts of the otherness and clashes of power inescapable facts of life: "If the identity of the society becomes an issue – one that cannot be regarded as trivial and, so, a matter of indifference – conflict over it can only become more bitter, particularly since some will be regarded as winners and others as losers" (Kukathas 1998, 693). Discussing the terms "winners and losers" also means the creation of inaccessible walls between "I" and "the Other":

> The boundaries between the Israeli "I" and the Palestinian "other" are vague and are separated functionally into two levels: First, the Palestinian "other" is separate from the Israeli "I" on the level of culture and identity but not so entirely external as to constitute an independent subject. Second, the Palestinians are the "other" within the Israeli "I" whose presence being unavoidable, must therefore be coped with. (Jamal 2000, 50)

Like Dalia and Bashir, other Palestinians and Israelis have a unique life on their multicultural land; however, the existence of 'I' and 'the Other' does not give a peaceful life to either nation. Bashir's family has a perfect life before Israelis' arrival. They have everything they want to be happy on this land: a good family, respected name, happy children, and a well-built house with a lemon tree in its garden. Like this Palestinian family, Israeli people share this dreamed-of paradise of diaspora and they have good intentions in coming to this land. Dalia and her family, together with many other Israeli families, have escaped from death and come here to start a new life.

These two families want happiness in their lives, but some concepts like happiness, love and war carry different meanings. When the war breaks out between Palestinians and Israelis in the eighth chapter of the book, the two families understand almost opposite things from the official announcements: "To Bashir and his family, words like these meant the enemy would be vanquished and the family would return home. To Dalia and her family, the words meant what they said – annihilation" (Tolan 2008, 210). The reason for this difference is very clear, Bashir and his family are the oppressed side and if they win the war, it would be the announcement of their freedom.