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Resisting Colonial Estrangement: Placing the “Colonial Subject” in the Center in Susan Abulhawa’s *The Blue between Sky and Water*

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the term “colonial estrangement” and its negative effects on the indigenous people’s perception of themselves, their nation, identity and the world they live in. However, it introduces Susan Abulhawa’s *The Blue between Sky and Water* as an anti-colonial estrangement narrative that effectively employs history, language and production as powerful tools that resurrect the past, enlighten and enliven the present, and create a future. The study investigates the vital role of these three tools in resolving identity crisis, inflaming a sense of belonging, stimulating self- improvement, and resisting feelings of imposed alienation and estrangement. This investigation relates the idea of estrangement to different literary themes such as identity, exile, relocation, suffering, trauma and dehumanization. The first anti-colonial estrangement tool, that is- history, is explored in the light of Michel Foucault’s theory of “eventualization”, the second, language, in the light of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s views on the politics of language, and the third, production, in the light of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ notion of the “lumpenproletariat.”

Keywords: estrangement, history, language, production, colonization.

مقاومة التغريب الاستعماري: تنصيب "الخاضعين للاحتلال" في المركز في رواية "الأزرق بين السماء والماء" لسوزان أبو الهوى

المخلص:

يناقش هذا البحث مصطلح "التغريب الاستعماري" وآثاره السلبية على تصور السكان الأصليين لأنفسهم وأمتهم وهويتهم والعالم الذي يعيشون فيه. ومع ذلك، فإنه يقدم رواية "الأزرق بين السماء والماء" لسوزان أبو الهوى باعتبارها رواية مناهضة للتغريب الاستعماري، حيث توظف و بشكل فعال التاريخ واللغة والإنتاج كأدوات قوية لبعث الروح في الماضي، وتنوير و إحياء الحاضر، و ولادة المستقبل. تبحث الدراسة في الدور الحيوي لهذه الأدوات الثلاثة في حل أزمة الهوية، وإثارة الشعور بالانتماء، وتحفيز تحسين الذات، ومقاومة مشاعر الغربة و التغريب التي يفرضها المحتل. تربط هذه الدراسة فكرة التغريب بموضوعات أدبية مختلفة مثل الهوية، والمنفى، إعادة التوطين، المعاناة، الصدمة، ونزع الصفة الإنسانية. يتم استكشاف الأداة الأولى المناهضة للتغريب الاستعماري، وهي التاريخ، في ضوء نظرية ميشيل فوكو "قولبة التاريخ كأحداث"، والثانية، اللغة، في ضوء آراء جوجي وا ثيونجو حول سياسة اللغة، والثالثة، الإنتاج، في ضوء فكرة كارل ماركس وفريدريك إنجلز عن " الطبقة الاجتماعية الدنيا الخالية من الوعي".

كلمات مفتاحية: التغريب، التاريخ، اللغة، الإنتاج، الاستعمار.

Introduction:

This paper aims to broaden the readers' understanding of the term "colonial estrangement" by interpreting and analyzing the literary work of Susan Abulhawa, *The Blue between Sky and Water* (2015), an analysis supported by evidence from the text, and framed by three literary theories: Michel Foucault's "eventualization," Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "the politics of language," and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' "the lumpenproletariat." The concept of estrangement has been attempted by a variety of scholars. According to Marx, "alienation and estrangement are simultaneously the experience and the process whereby people are rendered foreign to the world in which they are living" (Dillabough and Yoon 2017, p.129). Fanon's concept of estrangement involves making "the connections- or articulations- between an individual's internal world, and the external world of the constraining social, economic or political structures that surround and contain them" (Hook 2004, p.93). Estrangement, in its essence, emphasizes a sense of psychological loss, detachment, defamiliarization, alienation, and separation. It is "disunity between things or beings that once belonged or ought to belong together" (Ndlovu 2017, pp.46-47).

Colonial estrangement is one of the issues that have been gaining increasing interest in the fields of colonial and postcolonial studies. Upon seizing a land, the colonial powers tend to reshape it, as Robert Stone (see Harlow 1987, p.84) puts it, in a way that makes it look similar to the landscape they left in Europe, distort and reconstruct its historical records, and detach its people from their language, culture, geography, heritage and identity, thus, threatening their sense of belonging and rendering them strangers in their own homeland. In *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba defines colonization as "the take-over of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation" (1998, p.6). Such definition entails a variety of broader set of terms such as defamiliarization, colonial hegemony, exploitation, dispossession, and marginalization of the "colonial subject," which all lead to and enforce the "paradox of 'otherness,' of feeling foreign within the realm of the familiar" (Pobutsky 2007, p.164). Therefore, alienation or estrangement can reframe the new lives of indigenous people under colonization, generating violence and counter-violence, resistance, uprooting, diaspora and segregation, and at the same time pushing towards a process of affiliation to the cultural superiority of the colonial power. As noticed, estrangement is a psychological experience that has social, cultural, political and economic dimensions.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been described as the world's "most intractable conflict," a conflict that stems from two opposing claims to the Holy Land. Jews who were persecuted in Europe in the early twentieth century were dreaming of establishing a national homeland in Palestine- "the land of milk and honey" as they perceived it. The Jews' dreams of a homeland were culminated by the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which was a pledge by the British government announcing its support of the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was then a country of an Arab and Muslim majority, and a small minority of Jews. So, the land was far from being vacant, a fact that defies the phrase widely used by Jewish Zionists which depicts Palestine as an empty land that needs to be populated by people who don't have a country, "a land without a people for a people without a land." Such phrase aims at justifying the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, but through a complete denial of the existence of the "other." Therefore, when it comes to peopling Palestine with immigrant Jews, Palestinians are simply uprooted, exiled and disseminated in other parts of the world. The Palestinians have been suffering since 1948 (the year of the Nakba- "Catastrophe"). They have been subjected to violence,

massacres, humiliation, uprooting, dispossession, and trauma for more than seventy years. Such colonial practices threaten the very essence of their being, make them question their identity, and estrange them in their own homeland. Many Palestinians have been uprooted from their own villages and left out displaced in refugee camps, or exiled as strangers in other countries.

No doubt, indigenous literature written about and during colonization is especially significant. It has played a great role in giving voice to the silenced and oppressed, supporting their aspirations for equality, freedom and human rights. Thus, this literature can be considered an act of resistance, for it awakens the pre-colonial past and history, raises awareness of the oppressed current situation and plight, and inflames their desire for liberation. As a Palestinian American writer, Susan Abulhawa has gone through the same suffering as most Palestinians have, including relocation, oppression, exile and alienation. She dedicated her three novels, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), *The Blue between Sky and Water* (2015), and *Against the Loveless World* (2020), to address the question of Palestine, highlighting the suffering of the Palestinians and the Israeli frequent violations of human rights, and supporting the displaced, abused, and discriminated who face one of the world’s most merciless, military, and armed oppression. This study encourages a new reading of Susan Abulhawa’s *The Blue between Sky and Water* as an anti-colonial estrangement narrative, a narrative that resists the estrangement of the Palestinian from himself, his own people, identity, and homeland by employing three major tools: history, language and production. The first anti-colonial estrangement tool, that is- history, will be explored in the light of Michel Foucault’s theory of “eventualization”, the second, language, in the light of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s views on the politics of language, and the third, production, in the light of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ notion of the “lumpenproletariat.”

History/ Eventualization of Colonization

History/ Eventualization of Colonization- Theory

Eventualization is a term coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault who first introduced it in an interview with him which was later published as “The Impossible Prison”(1989). Eventualization means extracting or separating a singularity from a historical constant where it claims or seems to belong. It marks a discontinuity that imposes itself as “an obviousness” on a multiplicity of historical incessant events. By making such discontinuities visible, the historian is actually highlighting a problem that needs to be solved. Furthermore, eventualization doesn’t deal with history as being institutional, but rather as one that consists of “events” and which can be analyzed by relating such events to the multiple practices and processes which constitute them. Consequently, any singularity or event must be evaluated in relation to the degree of rationality that lies in its practices and policies, and supports its process of codification, or modification of what is “true and false”. Since eventualization was applied in his research on prisons, Foucault didn’t handle the prison as an institution, but as a multiplicity of practices, weighing their rationality and their Utopian promises of reformation.

History/ Eventualization of Colonization- Application in the Novel

Susan Abulhawa’s *The Blue between Sky and Water* is a narrative that resists historical reconstruction by the colonial power because it eventualizes colonization, showing it as a discontinuity in the long history of the Holy Land. It asserts Palestine’s constant cultural Arab and Islamic identity by resurrecting the past and by using the history of the coherent and legitimate continuum as a tool to defeat counter- narratives of colonization, which tries to impose itself as a singularity and “an obviousness” to normalize new realities of detachment and dichotomy between the land and its true owners. By asserting their historical right in their homeland, the novel empowers Palestinians and places them in the center, because the truth of belonging to a homeland defies skepticism and estrangement, and arms the Palestinians with what Edward Said called “life-enhancing” ideas and passions. In *Resistance Literature* (1987), Barbara Harlow talks about the great impact achieved upon using history as a resistance tool in narratives because the historical

evidence they contain arms or even “burdens” the reader with historical knowledge, in a way, involving him in the struggle. Undoubtedly, historical evidence also maintains and strengthens the indigenous people’s sense of belonging in spite of their current displaced and scattered lives.

The novel opens in Beit Daras, a rural Palestinian village, in 1947, one year before the Palestinian exodus- better known as the Nakba. A non-fictional historical introductory paragraph in chapter one paves the way to describe the simple, peaceful lives the Palestinians were leading then. This paragraph, one among several within the novel, gets the reader’s attention since it recounts history so effectively in a way that marginalizes the colonizers and supports the Palestinians’ right in their homeland based on the records of the past. Abulhawa asserts the Arab Islamic identity of Beit Daras when her narrator states that “the Mamluks had built it in A.D. 1325, when they ruled over Palestine” (Abulhawa 2015, p.7). Not only was the village created by the Arab Islamic Mamluk Sultanate, but it was also founded in a land called “Palestine.” So, Palestine is the norm in the peaceful flow of history, colonization the discontinuity. Throughout its history, the narrator says that this land has witnessed frequent land seizures by different colonial powers among which were Alexander the Great and his Macedonian army, the Romans, and the Crusaders who are still remembered because they formed pointless, foolish breaks in its constant history.

Needless to say, the novel provides a historical narrative that excludes the Jews from the long history of Palestine (the narrator always refers to them as “European Jews” and excludes them when naming major family clans in villages), consequently estranging and denying them any legitimate right to establish their homeland there, eventualizing their state and marking it as a singularity that doesn’t belong, exactly as how Bill Ashcroft (1995) deals with history as a strategy of legitimation where historical evidence always invokes “legitimate existence”. The narrator goes further to describe the early Israeli colonialists as “the Jewish gangs” (Abulhawa 2015, p.16) which became later the Israeli military army of Poles, Germans, French, Italians, Russians, Iranians, and many other nationalities, an army of foreigners that usurped the land on which Israel was declared a state, or, in the Foucauldian sense, an imposed “obviousness”, an intruding event among a multiplicity of other events that form the long history of ancient Palestine. As noticed, the historical narrative presented in the novel is based on placing Palestine in the center, Israel in the periphery of history.

By referring to the physical remnants and ruins of previous colonial periods- castles and citadels that were built by the Macedonians, the Romans, and Crusaders in Palestine- the narrator asserts the fact that colonial powers go, indigenous people stay- such is the just law of life. So, no matter how long occupation lasts and how powerful the colonial power is, colonization will come to an end one day, since colonization is not the norm but merely a discontinuity. Palestinians seem aware of this fact because they turned those grim reminders of the past colonial domination into places where children gather to play and lovers meet to heal and keep going, making a mockery of colonization. By using history as an anti- colonial estrangement tool, Abulhawa helps her readers to see the complete impartial accurate image of the situation in Palestine, because history resists erasure of what has always been Palestinian, Arab and Islamic in the Holy Land. Furthermore, history possesses such an authority over geography, identity and legitimate existence that Abulhawa uses successfully to empower Palestinians and estrange their oppressors. Such authority stems from the ability of historical records to raise questions concerning, according to Harlow (1987), the relationship between knowledge and power, because distorted knowledge and history can be a product of power exploitation, to make them benefit its aims and interests. *The Blue between Sky and Water* defies the rewriting of history by the colonial power by recounting the original version of historical narratives, which- in turn- opposes the other distorted counter narratives.

Susan Abulhawa’s choice of her narrator is quite a master-stroke. Khaled, one of the characters in the novel, whose name means “eternal” or “immortal” is a personification of history itself. He appears in the novel generations before his real birth and continues the narration even

after his death. From an omniscient first person point of view, Khaled narrates while transcending the boundaries of time and space, roaming the realms of the living and the dead, interacting with the real and supernatural worlds. He acts like an unbreakable bond between the past and present, the conscious and unconscious, camp-dwelling refugees and their relatives in exile, and stories told and untold; in short, he acts like a reasonable continuum of heritage and history. Obviously, history and language are interconnected in the novel in a marvelous way. Khaled would supernaturally appear only to those who are eager to learn reading and writing in Arabic but are facing obstacles. He first appeared, one year before the Nakba- which was two generations before his birth, by the riverside in Beit Daras as a young boy who would teach the child Mariam, his grandma's sister, how to read and write in Arabic, since she badly wanted to attend school, but her family couldn't afford it. Two generations later, this same young boy by the riverside would follow Nur, an estranged American Palestinian, in her dreams, encouraging her to learn Arabic. Thus, the history of Palestine is narrated in the novel through a child's eyes, innocent, honest and unrestrained.

Two rape incidents of Palestinian women were unfolded, told and condemned. The first was Nazmiyah's who was gang-raped by Israeli soldiers; the other was Nur's, almost two decades later, who was raped by her American step-father. Since rape is about power, not desire, about something forced, not wanted, then the assault on and usurpation of wombs symbolize these on and of the land. Therefore, the rape of Nazmiyah and of Nur can be read as the usurpation of the Palestinian land in the Nakba 1948 and the Naksa 1967, respectively. Their torn wombs represent a rupture, a discontinuity in the history of the land, and consequently an eventualized colonization. Ironically enough, the outcome of Nazmiyah's rape was Mazen who grew up to be a resistance fighter, the only resistance fighter among her eleven sons; the one who inherited the grey eyes of her Israeli rapist was highly regarded by the Palestinian community as a brave hero. By fighting back, Mazen was actually resisting imposed feelings of estrangement he felt towards himself as a Palestinian, his people, and his land, and was at the same time asserting his identity and sense of belonging.

What attracts the attention is that Khaled obtains a character and an appearance that remain constant throughout the novel, never changing, eternal. He is an abstraction represented in a person; he is the personification of history. He transcends the boundaries of space and time, never growing up. Khaled is forever a young child with a white streak of hair, playing by the river and teaching Arabic, or taking care of his family. The river symbolizes the flow of life, events, and history; young age symbolizes serious life that hasn't been lived yet but is about to come (decolonization). The white streak of hair, which appears as something contrary to the natural hair colour, represents a rupture, discontinuity, singularity within the constant flow of the norm, and since Khaled is history, then the white streak is colonization, estranged and eventualized. At the age of ten, Khaled becomes encapsulated in a rare neurological disorder that results in a coma-like state; he is alert, aware and conscious, but unable to move or speak due to complete paralysis of all his voluntary muscles. And since he is the personification of history, his paralysis reflects communal feelings of disablement, helplessness, weakness and uselessness felt in the Islamic Ummah (nation) towards the Palestine issue. Khaled's death, which sets his soul free after being entrapped for a while in his paralyzed body and which allows the narration to continue from the ethereal worlds of freedom, foreshadows an awakening in the Ummah and a movement toward independence and emancipation, for soon after his death, patients began to heal, prisoners were about to be released, and life began to flourish.

Language

The Politics of Language- Theory

In *Decolonizing the Mind*, (1981) Ngugi wa Thiong'o explores the issue of what he calls "colonial alienation" from a specific angle, that is- the politics of language. He argues that colonial hegemony and dominance over a land or a people are never complete without controlling the mental grounds of the indigenous people and their ways of thinking and living. And since language is the

best carrier of culture, images, imagination, thoughts, aspirations, history and heritage, then holding the native language captive, limiting its domains, showing it as the language of the peasantry and illiterate is a victory in itself for the colonial power. What makes the situation even worse are the feelings of estrangement, denial, and the detachment one feels towards himself, his people and culture, because by undervaluing your mother tongue, perceiving it as limited, low-in-status, and lacking in cultural competence, you are actually determining your self-worth. The further the indigenous man is taken away from his language, the more limits he sees in himself, and the gloomier his world becomes. Being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, natives will seek completeness in learning and using the imposed foreign language of colonization and of power which is depicted as the language of education, prestige, and the elite. Such adoption, Thiong'o argues, leads to results opposite to the intended effects, for it reinforces feelings of alienation and helplessness the indigenous feels when he expresses himself in a language that makes him stand in the center of another world to which he doesn't belong, viewing life with a skeptic eye and fearful heart. In other words, by accepting and adopting the language of the foreign dominant power, indigenous people are, in a way, submitting to and accepting colonial dominance, superiority and culture. Moreover, mirroring and glorifying the world of colonization by using and adoring its language is servility, pushed to its limit, and one that can be used to condemn those who choose to embrace the colonial inheritance and forsake their mother tongues as traitors to their history, nation and land. So, the more resistance shown against using the colonial language, the more harmony felt in the social and natural environment of the colonized, and consequently, the less estrangement, since embracing and using one's own mother tongue, and at the same time rejecting and abandoning the dominant foreign language can be read as a plain and even stark refusal to assimilate to the culture of colonization, accept the imposed sense of alienation and estrangement, and communicate with the world on basis of inferiority.

The Politics of Language- Application in the Novel

Though *The Blue between Sky and Water* is written in English, it is quite obvious that Abulhawa doesn't glorify English or accept it as a language of superiority and power; rather, she uses it as a lingua franca, used everywhere in the world and beyond the boundaries of geography, to curse colonization and make her voice heard across the globe. The focus is actually on Arabic which is celebrated throughout the novel as a form of resistance toward colonial estrangement, exactly the same way Thiong'o explains the relationship between the politics of language and the process of decolonising the indigenous mind. Palestinians assert their ethnic and national identity and uniqueness by speaking and learning their indigenous language- Arabic, protecting it from any attempt of replacement or erasure. Moreover, language is used in the novel as criteria upon which characters depend to classify people into true Palestinians, traitors, strangers, and estranged natives. So, in some scenes of the novel, language acts as a unifying factor, and in others as a differentiating factor. When Israeli forces attacked Beit Daras and other Palestinian villages, showering them with destruction and death, mercilessly raping, killing and dehumanizing civilians, villagers were forced to leave their homes and take the way to Gaza. Nazmiyeh, one character of the novel, who discovered that her little sister Mariam was left behind among trauma and bloodshed, decided to go back to the village in the darkness of night to rescue her. On her way back, she came across people fleeing in the opposite direction, exhausted, humiliated and traumatized. Since it was too dark to see and because they were overwhelmed by paralyzing fear, people could only sense the presence of each other; "who is there?" they would ask and then soothing warmth would seep into their tired, traumatized bodies and souls upon hearing the Palestinian *fallahi* accent.

The impact fallahi Arabic had on people amidst death and trauma is not at all strange; language was a source of peace and familiarity, because it marked a shared identity, suffering and even siblinghood, and that explains why Nazmiyeh and the other woman embraced as if celebrating a reunion of a lost family, though they were completely strangers. Speaking Arabic means that you

belong to "us," and not to "the other"- you are the son of this land and not a foreigner. Therefore, when Nur met Dr. Jamal in the USA, the first thing she noticed about him was that his voice had unique resonance in that foreign country, for it evokes the musical tones, tilting and posture of Arabic. The native language in a foreign country reflects shared roots and ends any feelings of estrangement for its speakers; it creates a new small world of familiarity within the larger world of marginalization and alienation.

Since language has the capacity to show similarities and bring people closer, it can highlight differences and render others strangers too. Playful little Mariam, who was hiding in the well when Israeli soldiers came to fetch water, immediately noticed that they were foreigners speaking a foreign language. Throughout the novel and in lots of scenes that contain face-to-face encounters with the Israeli army, the narrator gives hints like: the soldier yelled in *his* language, the soldier was murmuring in *his* language, the Israeli soldier spoke in a foreign tongue that neither the Palestinian community nor the other soldiers could understand... etc. By focusing on the different languages the Israeli soldiers speak, the narrator is taking them further and further from being rooted in the land, depicting them as belonging to a strange body planted by force in the pure land of Palestine. Thus, in Palestine Arabic is the norm, and the hegemonic language is a nonconformity, a violation of the norm which renders non-Arabic speakers foreigners, out of place.

Learning a new language in exile and abandoning one's own mother tongue makes the soul fragmented, lost and estranged. Mhammad, who was raised in the United States and who married a Spanish woman, was considered as an estranged Palestinian by his family in Gaza. They looked at him with pity since the encounter with "the other" made him unable or unenthusiastic to speak Arabic. His father, Mamdouh, used to lament the situation and the state of estrangement Mhammad was trapped in, always complaining that exile had feasted on what remained of heritage, history, language and home inside his son's heart. Therefore, when Mhammad passed away in a car accident, and Mamdouh got full custody of Nur, he was resolved not to let her into the same state of estrangement her father had gone through. So, he used to tell her stories about Palestine because he wanted her to know the place where her ancestral roots had dug deep into history; he also insisted on speaking only Arabic whenever they talked, and he was planning that they both return home to Gaza as soon as he recovered. After her grandfather had passed away before being able to reunite with his family in Palestine, Nur was frequently haunted by a dream in which she saw herself in Beit Daras among people who she only knew through her Jiddo's stories, a dream in which she felt herself estranged, unable to understand conversations in her mother tongue, a dream that provoked a necessity towards a process of "decolonizing her mind" in Thiong'o's jargon. She would see Mariam and Khaled by the riverside playing and learning Arabic, which she couldn't comprehend; she would ask Khaled to teach her the language, and he would agree on one condition- that she learns to blink first. She would do her best to blink but couldn't, then she would always wake up with anxiety and in a state of panic. In fact, blinking is an involuntary movement of the eyes that is done automatically, so it is normal to see some people trying not to blink, but not vice versa.

Obviously, blinking is used symbolically in the novel to convey a much deeper meaning that lies behind the simple act of controlling one's eyelids movement. Blinking helps us clean our eyes by spreading tears across them, and protects them from dust, dirt, external irritants, and foreign things. Therefore, Nur's inability to blink symbolizes her inability to cleanse her soul from feelings of impurity and estrangement resulting from living in a foreign land, and her struggle to defend her threatened identity and culture. The dream itself reflects the state of dichotomy Nur feels towards the world she lives in, and her fear of losing her ability to speak her mother tongue through her coming years in America, and of returning to Gaza someday as a stranger. However, the haunting dream vanished completely once Nur joined college, majoring in Arabic. In other words, by overcoming her linguistic exile, Nur restored peace and the lost psychological order to her tortured alienated soul. Though Nur could speak Arabic well when she visited Gaza for the first time,

Palestinians could easily classify her as an estranged native because it was true she spoke Arabic, but with the accent of a foreigner. So, her relatives ended that feeling of estrangement by correcting her pronunciation of words, and by teaching her to speak pure Arabic.

Language can also uncover possible traitors in the midst of Palestinian social networks. The narrator describes Nur's visit to Dr. Jamal's house after accepting his wife's invitation to dinner. During the meal, Dr. Jamal's wife, Maisa, tried repeatedly to engage Nur in a conversation in English, neglecting the presence of the other two women relatives of Nur who could only speak Arabic. Nur, who was Palestinian by origin, American by birth would only reply in Arabic, determined to assert her Palestinian Arab identity and loyalty, and to reject any kind of marginalization and estrangement. On the contrary, Maisa was bragging that her family used only English and French to communicate at home, thus underestimating Arabic and considering other colonial languages as prestigious and important indicators of elite social position. Abandoning one's own language for another is a kind of treason, exactly as how Thiong'o puts it in *Decolonising the Mind*; her betrayal of her mother tongue symbolizes her betrayal of her homeland, a betrayal that made Nazmiyah question the obscure, morally questionable condition that Maisa and her daughters were allowed to move freely in and out of Gaza, while the sick, wounded and dying were banned from travelling for medical treatment.

The use of language in the episode in which Mazen was taken prisoner by the Israeli army is especially significant. The family was having a birthday party on the beach when a group of undercover Israeli agents approached the family, "calling out in flawless Palestinian Arabic, 'Mazen Atiyeh! Salaam, brother! How are you doing?'" (Abulhawa 2015, p.61). We are used to seeing natives around the world using the colonial language of power, prestige and superiority. But what happens when the situation is reversed? What happens when Israeli agents use Arabic to communicate with Palestinians when you don't see a single Palestinian uttering a single word in Hebrew throughout the seventy- one chapters of the novel? Susan Abulhawa aims at showing the unique status of Arabic in Palestine; it is the language that sits on the throne of lingual sovereignty and domination. It possesses such irresistible penetrating strength to which even conquerors will submit. Arabic in Palestine is the norm to which all violators will one day apologize and conform. In fact, the reader can sense that everything in the novel speaks Arabic, not only the people, but also history, culture, traditions and the land itself.

One of the areas that show the power of language is naming, because, according to Bill Ashcroft, (1995, p.283) to name something is to know, fathom, navigate, and control it. Therefore, to name a person is to give him identity, to make him belong, and to give meaning to his life. The conflict that occurred between Nur's Palestinian Arab grandparents and her Spanish mother on naming her symbolizes the hybrid world she belongs to, and the clash between two different cultures. Mamdouh and Yasmine, Nur's grandparents, told their son that they would ardently love it to call their granddaughter Mariam, and if not, in compromise, they would also be appreciative if he gave her any Arabic name. On the contrary, Nur's mother objected to naming her child an Arabic name; why did she have to welcome and tolerate such a name after all? Each one of the two opposing parties wanted to give Nur an identity, to make her belong to his/her world, and to estrange her from the other. At last, Arabic won, and the child was called "Nur" which means "light" in Arabic, foreshadowing the joy, hope and light Nur would later bring to her grandfather's gloomy and dark days, after he had lost his wife and only son, distracting him from his exilic heartache and his feeling of alienation. Therefore, when Nur was moved to the care of her mother after her grandfather's death, the first thing her mother considered was changing Nur's name into a non- Arabic name. In response, the little child shook her head in confusion, for she couldn't imagine that it was even possible to change someone's name, because changing a name is the first step towards concealing, distorting, and stealing a true identity.

Naming Rhet Shel after the American activist Rachel Corrie who was intentionally run over by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza is also significant. It is a commemoration of heroism, martyrdom, and the voice of truth. It is a way to tell the world that though Rachel Corrie is American, she belongs to Palestine. She has never been a stranger in Gaza, neither in her life nor in her death; she is one of "us" and not of "the other." Therefore, shortly after her death, everyone in Palestine was naming his/her daughters Rachel. But what actually attracts the attention is the appropriation and Arabization of both the pronunciation and meaning of the name to suit the Palestinian culture. The pronunciation was modified to an Arabized two-syllable correspondence to the English name, that came out as Ra-Shel or Rhet Shel, and a new meaning was coined, for regardless of what the name means in English, in Palestine, it stands for and connotes supreme qualities and values, namely pure heartedness, unflagging faith, and fearless bravery. So, it is true that the Palestinians called their daughters English names to honour Rachel Corrie, but the name was first redefined to blend with their ethnic and national interests and identity.

Production

Production/ The Lumpenproletariat- Theory

Production, which involves a process of creating or adding value to available things to make them beneficial to the human needs, can include both intangible creations (intellectual production) and tangible ones (material production). It would be very useful to use Karl Marx (1848) and Friedrich Engels' (1848) notion of the "lumpenproletariat" to understand the relationship between estrangement and production- or better, the lack of it. The term "lumpenproletariat" was coined to refer to the unproductive stratum which lies at the very bottom of the social ladder, and to separate it, making it distinct from that of the proletariat (or the working class), to which it seemingly belongs. This Marxian concept takes in the worst and lowest elements of society including the unemployed, beggars, homeless, poor, thieves, prostitutes, vagabonds, and criminals of all kinds. A set of derogatory traits is attributed to this class, including idleness, extreme vulgarity, cheapness, venality, parasitism, and animalism, and is used to understand, explain and predict its behaviour. Since the lumpenproletariat lack organization and any sense of belonging whether social, political, or economic, they will be inactive in any revolutionary step towards political reformation or economic advancement. Therefore, they are considered by Marx as a burden on society, a decaying item, a civilization's scum, dregs, and crumbs. They are dipped in an ocean of estrangement because an individual's status in society depends on the degree of his participation in the production process, and since they are completely passive in this regard, they are dealt with as outsiders to the history of productive societies and condemned as harmful exploiters who neglect the natural call for work and who don't seek fulfillment in getting a vocation. By reducing their productive capacities below the normal level of humans, the lumpenproletariat reach a state of animalism that makes them accept to live a life of basic needs and with the minimum of pleasures, attained through parasitism and getting what the others already have without any promise or act of reciprocation.

Unquestionably, there is a firm and complex relationship between production and identity. People who live in self-sufficient communities are usually more proud of their identity and have a stronger sense of belonging than those living in countries suffering from economic stagnation. Therefore, one effective weapon colonial powers tend to use to enforce a feeling of alienation and estrangement in the souls of indigenous people is, according to Ashcroft, (2013, p.80) restraining the local industry and hindering its transition towards a thriving economy, surely for the benefit of that of the colonial power which will be always occupying a powerful, leading position. In other words, by paralyzing the production capacity of the natives, colonization is transforming them from producers into consumers, productive into lumpenproletariat, independent into dependent, and belonging into estranged. Thus, production/ consumption disparity is frequently employed as a powerful identity-management tool in colonial contexts. One great step that indigenous people can take towards fighting an imposed sense of estrangement and restoring a lost sense of belonging is

development which, in turn, Ashcroft argues, requires renunciation and refusal of the imposed colonial structures of economic dominance. So, if the colonized people can secure important sources they can turn to as fixed means of livelihood without depending on the colonial powers, they are, in a way, resisting any sense of inferiority, humiliation, dependency and estrangement.

Production/ The Lumpenproletariat- Application in the Novel

No doubt, Susan Abulhawa opens her novel one year before the Nakba to create a sharp contrast between life in pre- colonial Beit Daras and Gaza and life there in the aftermath of Israeli colonization. Beit Daras of (1947) is represented in the novel as a historical, peaceful and bountiful village, a village of farms, meadows, beehives, and vineyards, a village of farmers and beekeepers who sold their jars of honey all over the world, from Egypt, to Turkey, and even to Mali and Senegal. Villagers at that time could freely work on their lands, and afford to guarantee adequate incomes vital to ensure the sustenance and well- being of their families. However, colonization turned everything upside down. Palestinians were uprooted from their villages, displaced in refugee camps, oppressed and beleaguered in Gaza, and forbidden from cultivating their occupied lands or fishing in their sea. The psychological transformation the characters of the novel undergo because of unemployment, poverty, hunger and humiliation is very painful for the reader to see, especially after the sudden twist he witnesses in the lifestyle of Palestinians because of occupation. It is really difficult to see the true land owners deprived and suffering, turned into lumpenproletariat, in the Marxian sense, and the colonizers and strangers drenched in the bliss and bounties of a land to which they don't belong.

The blockade and isolation of Gaza Strip, where the families of Beit Daras were relocated, show how a whole community of innocent Palestinians is illegally held to live in an open-air prison, and in very inhumane conditions. The novel sheds light on Israel's violations of human rights in Gaza by depicting the impossible life Palestinians have to cope with, a life of collective punishment which lacks basic human necessities and supplies. People have to become acclimatized to the lack of food, medicine, clean water, electricity, security, healthcare and means of sustenance. The narrator describes the long process one needs to take a bath in Gaza because every drop of water counts. Gazians can't enjoy a luxurious shower directly from the tap, rather they have to scoop water from a wash bucket, and at the same time collect the dirty water in another container so it can be used to flush the toilet. They also have to lead a life defined by unreliable and poor electricity supply, and frequent, long, and sudden power cuts. Hospitals, medical teams and patients suffer as well because of shortages of essential drugs, power outages, tests that can't be trusted because the kits, which come through the tunnels, face prolonged delays without any kind of refrigeration, and frequent Israeli attacks which make Gaza's hospitals jammed again, causing a further delay of some urgent and necessary surgeries.

What's more, Israel tightens its grip on every means of livelihood by reducing work and job possibilities to the minimum and raising unemployment to eighty percent, restricting how far Gazians can go fishing in the Mediterranean Sea, and bombing the tunnels through which food, medicine, and other essential products are smuggled into the besieged strip. Such policy of severe restrictions Israel follows in Gaza aims at making Palestinians suffer, kneel down, submit and surrender to negative feelings of inferiority, humiliation, and estrangement, resulting from enforcing the sense of the lumpenproletariat, who accept to live a life of basic needs and with the minimum of pleasures, on them. No doubt, the harsh conditions and stressful environment imposed on Gazians can lead to deleterious psychological effects, especially on formerly active, hardworking farmers and workers who were rendered jobless, and who were suddenly made to belong to a new classification- the lumpenproletariat, bearing the shame of living on the charity of the United Nations and their ration booklets. So by turning those productive young men into consumers, the Israeli military army is not, in fact, sparing the Palestinians any kind of punishment available: physical or emotional. What's worse, one problem generates many; physically, no work means no

money, no money means no food, and no food means malnutrition, and similarly, psychologically no work means humiliation, humiliation means inferiority, and inferiority means estrangement and loss of identity. Therefore, in different scenes in the novel, the reader can see those men falling prey to a collection of bad moods, navigating life in low spirits, and pouring their anger on their innocent wives and children. Production is what actually needed by such helpless men to feel their self-worth in a world they struggle to participate in.

The Blue between Sky and Water presents production achieved through creative ways and insistence as an anti-colonial estrangement tool that defies any classification of the Gazians as 'the lowly lumpenproletariat'. Since a blockade has been instated on Gaza, the movement of people and goods in and out of the strip has been restricted and tightly controlled; Gazians are denied one of their simplest human rights- moving freely- and are isolated from the rest of the world. By digging tunnels under the Egyptian-Gaza border, Palestinians outsmarted the colonial power because through these tunnels comes almost everything, banned but badly needed, including food, diapers, pencils, petrol, eating utensils, books, medicine, and anything else they can afford to buy from the Egyptians, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. So, the tunnels to Gaza act like an underground circulatory system of arteries and veins to a beating heart. Moreover, the tunnels have created well-paid job opportunities for people who suffer from job losses and unemployment caused by the siege. Not only have the tunnels provided the Gazians with material products crucial for survival and well-being, but also broken, in a way, the Israeli-imposed blockade. Upon her visit to Egypt to meet Nzinga, Nur and other Palestinian travelers had to go through a humiliating experience to get back to Gaza. They waited and waited while the Egyptian border was closed, then opened, repeatedly because some papers were missing a symbol- a dot or a dash sometimes! It was only through the underworld of the tunnels that they could reunite with their families in Gaza and escape the humiliation and suffering heaped on them by oppression. Therefore, the tunnels, which are the result of the Palestinian intellectual production and ingenuity, provide a secret parallel world of underground economy and human prosperity.

Since Israel has been waging a fierce war on the Palestinians' means of livelihood in Gaza, Palestinians fight back by creating new ways to generate an income. The novel conveys the awful conditions of life in the sea and the daily suffering of fishermen. Israel was not satisfied with limiting the fishing zone of Gaza to three nautical miles only, where water is shallow and sea creatures aren't plentiful; rather, it went further to make Palestinians go fishing under fire in the restricted area. The incident when Abdel Qader and his fishermen comrades were stripped naked, humiliated, shot, and killed in the sea exposes a small part of the cruelty, oppression and injustices that Gazians are subjected to on a daily basis. Though the fishermen didn't advance beyond the proper limits of the fishing zone, Israeli naval vessels shot their boat, ordered them to throw what their nets had caught back into the sea, and made them undress and get out of their boat into the water. Then, Israeli soldiers waited and waited and made bets on which fisherman would drown first, and when the first fisherman sank, some soldiers rejoiced as others paid them money. It was too difficult for Abdel Qader, one of the only two survivors of the incident, to undertake the humiliation, dehumanization, and the very essence of the idea that the fishermen were being killed for sport and fun, an idea that Abulhawa emphasizes by quoting an Israeli soldier upon attacking Gaza, "you feel like a child playing around with a magnifying glass, burning up ants" (Abulhawa 2015, p.149). So, Abdel Qader forsook the sea and fishing, though he was raised up as a fisherman, but he refused to give in to the feelings of helplessness or estrangement. Rather, he started his own small business by getting a loan from an aid organization by which he built a chicken coop on the roof of his house, bought chickens and chicks, and sold their eggs and meat. Building a chicken coop can be read symbolically as building a new future and life for the family, a life away from humiliation, poverty and denial, a life of restored self-acceptance as the head of the house is capable of supporting his family, sparing them the humiliation of standing in the UNRWA ration lines.

Humiliation, no doubt, is directly linked to feelings of helplessness and unproductivity, for production is the key to success, free will, and human dignity.

Others managed to ensure an income through their realization that rich Palestinians in exile are willing to pay the highest possible price to obtain anything from the homeland. In their burning longing to be embraced by the soil of their homeland, if not in life, then in death, one exiled family paid thousands of dollars to get some dirt from Nablus which they sprinkled on their exiled father's grave. Therefore, women in the camps of Gaza turned to embroidering thobes (traditional Palestinian robes worn by women), which were smuggled through the tunnels to be sold all over the world. Robert Stone (see Harlow 1987, p.84) expresses the same idea when he states that, in their yearning for their absent homeland, the exiled start to think about it in symbols and images, and not in how it really looks like, in a way transforming it into a mythical, idealized place of origin. So, for diasporic Palestinians, dirt and traditional costumes are symbols that embody a missing homeland, symbols that carry the scent of Palestine to which they belong and dream to return. Such symbolic entities they cling to in their exile are anti-estrangement reminders of their identity, culture, and national pride. Similarly, the UNRWA ration cards which are attached to the feelings of humiliation, suffering, and helplessness in the collective memory of Palestinians, are conceived positively by the narrator as symbols which would accumulate one day into documents of identity, history and inheritance, proving the refugees' right to return where they belong. Other people chose to make a living by taking advantage of the mother of all natural resources and bounties- land. They spent their days digging, growing food crops, harvesting, feeding and milking their animals, and trading whatever they produced with other things they needed. By being productive, they added value to their lives and were able to accept themselves and appreciate what they offer to their community.

No doubt, the land of Palestine is generous; people who worked on the land not only could afford to maintain a good living, but they were also able to inspire other people in the camp and restore normality to their estranged lives. The land has a magic effect on everyone who gets attached to it; strong bonds with the land beget love, familiarity, self-confidence, and loyalty. What's more, their positive energy pervades and touches everyone in the camp, restoring hope, joy, and vitality to the tired souls. The beekeeper's widow, whose sole source of living was a small garden, leads the most satisfactory life after relocation, and bestows happiness on everyone, helping them not to be fixated on the difficulties of their current lives, and on the traumas of their previous days. She spends her days cultivating the land and cooking, and at mealtimes, her house is always full of people because she cooks with love, making her place a source of revitalization where people would hang out to relax, eat and socialize. People gathered at her house, ate, talked, joked, sang and danced because the aromas of her cooking resurrected memories, stories, and hope. Her garden was a source of life to the camp not only in terms of nutrition but also in terms of medication and healing. There grew food crops and medicinal herbs from which she prepared effective "Arab medicine" that played a central role in saving the lives of seriously ill patients whose medication was missing in Gaza because of the siege. Upon receiving her herbal remedies, Alwan, who suffered from breast cancer, felt much better physically and psychologically, especially when her doctor declared, while examining her X- ray, that the fatal tumors had shrunk. Agricultural production, which depends on labor and land, plays an important role in food security, economic independence, social harmony, and healing.

Israel's frequent bombing of Gaza, often resulting in burning bodies and souls alike, has excessive effects on the physical and psychological health of the residents of the strip. Gaza, which already suffers from a humanitarian crisis because of the imposed ongoing siege, is subjected every time to new destruction of thousands of houses, infrastructure, and human beings. It doesn't take long after people start to conform to and comprehend the new reality of their situation in the aftermath of bombing that a new military assault is launched once again. At such times, people fall

prey to a mixture of exorbitant and uncontrolled feelings of anger, despair and estrangement. They wander through destruction, death, and wreckage with numbness since they communicated with expressionless faces, and wordless tongues. Long-term repression of such emotions can be devastating, but characters in the novel make them flow out, not in words, but in their positive energy towards reconstruction and production. Thus, people returned to themselves, recapturing life; they started a process of cleaning the land from debris and dust, burying their dead, and securing shelter for families that became homeless through collective hardworking efforts of rebuilding. Because building materials were not allowed into the besieged strip, people had to be creative and recycle tons of rubble into new building bricks, and use mud instead of cement. Men worked under the hymns of the holy Quran, the prayers of mothers, and reassurance of wives, restoring life, their sense of belonging, and a distorted identity to completion. They erased the stains of blood and the pollution of bombs from the landscape, but not from their memories. Such traumatic experiences and the Palestinians' ability to rise up each time will always be there in the records of history, shaping their identity and asserting their denied rights in a homeland that they adore and build with sweat and blood. Therefore, the reader can see the characters, living in camps or in exile, pass those narratives from one generation to the other, because clinging to such narratives helps them undertake daily hardships, keep their heads high, and fight any sense of imposed estrangement.

The Palestinian refugee camps, where daily living conditions are abysmal, prove that from the womb of suffering, success is born. Though those camps lack the simplest basic infrastructures where people had to stand in long queues to use the communal kitchens and bathrooms, they are also places that give rise to great minds, poets, artists and leaders. Palestinian intellectuals, leaders, students and even workers, born in camps, have proven their worth, not only in Palestine but also in other Arab countries and all over the world as being hardworking, productive, and creative. Upon moving to Kuwait to work there in construction, Mamdouh, Nur's grandfather, describes the extent to which this Arab country has benefited from the Palestinian bright minds. Palestinian teachers, doctors, engineers, army and police officers, businessmen and intellectuals participated in building Kuwait in every sector of society. Suffering generates insistence, and insistence motivates production; production, in turn, asserts uniqueness and resists estrangement. The indigenous people's implementation of their capacities and development of their professional skills help them mitigate the effects of suffering and trauma, position themselves as fruitful for their nation and other nations, restore a lost identity and pride, and recover from the impact of colonial alienation. Therefore, Nur, probably the greatest fighter of colonial estrangement in the novel since she was born in exile to a Spanish mother hostile to Arabs and an estranged father, takes refuge in production and education as a source of creating and asserting an identity. Thus, she escaped her dark days in the USA by working countless hours, paid or volunteered. In school and in different foster homes, she was always the student who got the highest grades, because through education she had found a way to rise and shine, to be loved and admired. Similarly, when she chose to learn her native language in college, she was actually on her way to stability since she needed something heavy to anchor her down, something that placed her in the center of her world, gave her an identity, and made her blossom though in exile. In short, production, whether material or intellectual, is an act of honoring the self, understanding one's worth, and fighting any sense of degrading estrangement.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a study of Susan Abulhawa's *The Blue between Sky and Water* (2015) as an anti-colonial estrangement narrative. The novel employs history, language and production as effective tools that empower Palestinians, assert their right in their homeland, and enforce their sense of belonging and national pride. By so doing, Abulhawa is at the same time placing the colonized indigenous people in the center, and the colonizers at the periphery by

emphasizing their detachment from the land, its long history, and language, thus, rendering them strangers and weakening their position in the ongoing historical struggle over the Holy Land of Palestine. Through exposing the daily suffering caused by the siege, the pain of exile and relocation, and colonial oppression and dehumanization, the novel shows the central role history, language and production play in easing the agony, improving self-esteem, establishing a stable sense of identity, and consequently challenging and resisting colonial estrangement.

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