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**Counter -Narrative of Resistance and Defiance: A
Reading of Naomi Shihab Nye's *Blood and Before I Was
Gazan***

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Dedication

To my pillar of strength, who taught me that resilience is power and that justice is indivisible.

To the one who carried the burdens of my days without complaint my father, the greatest and
most just man I have ever known.

To the one who gave me life twice once when I was born and once when she taught me that
nothing is impossible. To a heart that never grows old and a love that never fades my mother,
my first homeland and my eternal refuge.

To the heartbeat that extends in two souls, my sisters, who were my crutch when I stumbled
and turned my sorrow into laughter. My companions on this journey and my guiding light in
the dark.

To my little one, who grows before my eyes every day, whose laughter eases the burdens of
life, and whose innocence reminds me of the beauty in simplicity to my little brother.

To my family, the steadfast roots that keep me grounded, the warmth that never fades. To
those who made me feel that I belong, even in moments of doubt.

To the friends who became small homelands, who turned exhaustion into joy, and who made
the road shorter and dreams closer.

To my teachers, who handed me the keys to knowledge and never withheld the light of
wisdom. To those who taught me that every question is the beginning of an answer and that
hard work is the true path to success.

To everyone who believed in me, who saw my potential when I doubted myself, and who
supported me even with a single word my deepest gratitude to you all.

All love..

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Abstract

This research examines the role of counter-narratives in postcolonial literature, focusing on Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry as a means of resistance and defiance. Through a critical analysis of *Blood and Before I Was Gazan*, the study explores how Nye challenges dominant Western representations of Palestinian identity, displacement, and resilience. Drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial feminist critiques, and Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and cultural negotiation, the research highlights how Nye's poetry reclaims Palestinian identity and counters hegemonic discourses. By weaving personal and collective memory, Nye presents poetry as an act of defiance against historical erasure and political marginalization. The study also situates Nye's work within the broader context of Arab diaspora literature, precisely the Palestinian narratives that emphasize cultural survival and historical continuity. Ultimately, this research underscores the significance of literature as a tool for resistance, demonstrating how Nye's poetry asserts Palestinian presence and identity within the global literary and political landscape.

Keywords: Postcolonialism , Counter-narrative, Resistance, Palestinian identity, Diaspora, Cultural memory, Defiance.

الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث دور السرد المضاد في الأدب ما بعد الاستعماري، مع التركيز على شعر نعومي شهاب ناي كوسيلة للمقاومة والتحدى. من خلال تحليل نقدي لمجموعتي دم وقبل أن أكون غزياً، يستكشف البحث كيف تتحدى ناي التمثيلات الغربية السائدة للهوية الفلسطينية، والتهجير، والصمود. بالاعتماد على كتاب الاستشراق لإدوارد سعيد، ونقد غاياتريسيفاك النسوي ما بعد الاستعماري، ونظريات هومي بابا حول الهجنة والتفاوض الثقافي، يبرز البحث كيف يعيد شعر ناي تأكيد الهوية الفلسطينية ويدحض الخطابات المهيمنة. ومن خلال نسج الذاكرة الشخصية والجماعية، تقدم ناي الشعر كفعل مقاومة ضد الطمس التاريخي والتهميش السياسي. كما يضع البحث أعمال ناي في سياق أوسع ضمن أدب الشتات العربي، بالأخص سرديات فلسطينية التي تؤكد على البقاء الثقافي والاستمرارية التاريخية. في النهاية، يبرز هذا البحث أهمية الأدب كأداة مقاومة، موضحاً كيف يرسخ شعر ناي الهوية الفلسطينية ضمن المشهدين الأدبي والسياسي العالمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الاستعمار، السرد المضاد، المقاومة، الهوية الفلسطينية، الشتات، الذاكرة الثقافية، التحدى.

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General Introduction

Background of the study:

The Palestinian narrative is often overshadowed by Western representations that misrepresent or silence Palestinian voices, reinforcing stereotypes that distort Palestinian identity, culture, and struggles. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, analyzes how the West creates biased portrayals of the East, framing it as a place of disaster, excess, and barbarism. He argues that the West defines and dominates the Orient, depicting it as a "silent and dangerous space" (57). These representations sustain a larger narrative of Western dominance, marginalizing Palestinians and others from the East. Said's theory of "writing back" against Orientalism is essential in this context, as it calls for the refutation of dominant narratives by intellectuals, such as poets and novelists, who challenge these colonial stereotypical representations.

Many writers of Arab, mainly Palestinian descent believe in the sense of literature as a vehicle to examine the issues and problems faced by their communities and homelands. Arab diaspora literature writers, including Susan Abulhawa, Randa Jarrar, Fadia Faqir, Diana Abujaber, and Naomi Shihab Nye are no exceptions to this belief. The present study primarily focuses on Naomi Shihab Nye, a prominent Arab-American poet, who offers a counter-narrative that challenges such misrepresentations. Through her poetry, she explores themes of resistance, identity, and the Palestinian experience under occupation from within a Western milieu. Poems like *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan* challenge stereotypes by emphasizing Palestinian resilience and identity. In *Blood*, Nye reflects on her struggle with dual identities—American and Palestinian—while commemorating the trauma of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Through her reference to "Palestinian blood," she underscores a deep connection to her heritage and a commitment to resisting the dominant narrative. Similarly, "Before I Was Gazan" highlights the enduring strength of Palestinian families in Gaza,

emphasizing their resilience and defiance against oppression (Al Mousa, Kitishat, and Almahasheer 121).

Significance of The Study:

This study is important because it focuses on voices that are often ignored. Although Nye's works have been explored in different contexts, there is still a lack of analysis of her poetry from a postcolonial resistance perspective. This research aims to fill that gap by examining how her poetry reaffirms Palestinian identity, challenges Western narratives, and contributes to contemporary postcolonial discourse and the question of Palestine.

Research Questions:

This current study aims to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do Naomi Shihab Nye's poems *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan* construct a Counter-Narrative to Western representations of Palestinian identity?
2. How does Nye use poetic voice and imagery to portray themes of resistance, loss, and cultural survival in the context of the Palestinian experience?
3. What role does personal memory and collective history play in Nye's representation of identity and belonging in her poetry?

Methodology :

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically textual analysis, to examine the selected poems of Naomi Shihab Nye — *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan*. The analysis is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial theory, particularly the contributions of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha. The research applies

close reading techniques to explore how Nye's poetry functions as a counter-narrative that resists dominant representations of Palestinian identity.

The methodology involves the identification and interpretation of key themes, symbols, and rhetorical devices that reflect postcolonial concerns such as resistance, cultural memory, identity, and defiance. This approach allows for a critical engagement with the text, revealing how poetic language becomes a medium of political and cultural resistance.

In addition, the study integrates insights from postcolonial feminist criticism, particularly through Spivak's lens, to examine how Nye's work amplifies marginalized voices. Secondary data, including academic journal articles, literary critiques, and theoretical texts, are used to support and contextualize the primary textual analysis. The combination of these methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of Nye's poetic strategies and their significance within the field of Palestinian diaspora literature.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary aim of this research is to analyze the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye, considering it as a Counter-Narrative of resistance and defiance. The study seeks to explore how Nye's poetry challenges and resists dominant narratives, particularly those surrounding Palestinian identity, displacement, and struggle. This research also aims to investigate the ways in which Nye's poetry articulates a form of defiance against colonial and oppressive forces, offering alternative perspectives that challenge the mainstream discourse on the Palestinian experience.

Through these aims and objectives, this research will provide a deeper understanding of how Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry offers a powerful Counter-Narrative to dominant colonial and postcolonial discourses. By focusing on the themes of resistance, identity, and defiance, this study will give valuable insights into the role of literature in shaping and challenging stereotypical narratives, particularly in the context of Palestinian identity and diaspora. Ultimately, the findings will advance the field of postcolonial and feminist literary studies, demonstrating how literature can act as both a reflection and a tool for resisting oppression and promoting alternative narratives by marginalized voices.

The Structure of the study:

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter, titled "The Arab Diaspora Literature: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives," is also divided into several sections. It provides a comprehensive overview of Arab diaspora literature, focusing on its historical and theoretical foundations. The chapter explores the definition and key features of the Arab diaspora, highlighting its impact on identity and cultural representation. Additionally, it discusses the Question of Palestine in Arab diaspora literature, emphasizing its significance in shaping literary narratives. The theoretical framework is based on postcolonial theories, particularly Edward Said's concept of resistance and Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial feminist perspective. The chapter also examines Arab diaspora literature as a form of postcolonial writing, identifying major themes of resistance and defiance. Lastly, it introduces Naomi Shihab Nye as a central figure in Arab diaspora literature, analyzing her literary style, themes, and contributions.

The second chapter, titled "Resistance and Defiance in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry," presents an in-depth analysis of Nye's selected poems, *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan*. This chapter explores the themes of resistance, identity, and Palestinian struggle in Nye's poetry,

examining how her work challenges dominant Western Narratives. It focuses on the use of literary devices, such as symbolism, tone, and imagery, to convey messages of resilience and cultural survival. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the representation of the Palestinian struggle in Nye's poetry, linking it to postcolonial and feminist theoretical perspectives. Special attention is given to the role of Palestinian women in resistance within the diaspora context, as reflected in Nye's works.

**CHAPTER-I. The Arab Diaspora Literature: Historical and
Theoretical Perspectives**

Introduction:

Chapter One presents an extensive overview of Arab Diaspora Literature, focusing on its historical and theoretical foundations. The chapter begins with the definition of the Arab diaspora, examining its unique features and the impact of displacement on identity, culture, and community. It delves into the significant question of Palestine in Arab Diaspora Literature, addressing how the Palestinian struggle is represented and its influence on the broader diaspora experience. The chapter also explores the various concepts, features, and trajectories of Arab diaspora literature, highlighting themes such as memory, nostalgia, and the quest for belonging. Following this, the chapter examines postcolonialism as a theoretical framework, drawing on the works of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak to understand resistance, representation, and identity within the context of Arab diaspora writings. Said's theoretical perspectives of resistance and counter-narrative and Spivak's postcolonial feminist perspective are crucial in exploring how these writers challenge hegemonic narratives and give voice to marginalized experiences. The chapter then shifts to explore Arab Diaspora Literature as a form of postcolonial literature. It identifies recurring themes of resistance and defiance in Arab diaspora writings, emphasizing how these authors confront colonial narratives, cultural erasure, and identity struggles. Special attention is given to the Palestinian struggle, as it plays a central role in the literature of exile and displacement written by Arab descent writers. Finally, the chapter focuses on Naomi Shihab Nye as a prominent voice of the Arab diaspora. It provides an overview of her literary style, themes, and contributions, offering insights into how her works reflect the complexities of diaspora experiences and contribute to the broader discourse on identity, resistance, and belonging.

This chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of Arab diaspora literature, providing the necessary historical and theoretical context to understand the challenges and contributions of writers in the diaspora.

I.1. Defining the Arab Diaspora Literature:

Arab Diaspora literature broadly engages with themes of exile, hybridity, and cultural identity. Exile is not only a physical displacement but also a psychological state, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their surroundings. As Maleh observes, "Thematically, the works mostly concerned themselves with the issue of psychological and social alienation (at home and abroad) and the 'return of the exile' theme, the experiences of hybridity and double-consciousness, an almost frantic preoccupation with identity, and the quest for authentic self-representation" (8).

Importantly, Identity in diaspora is not fixed but continuously negotiated. Arab diasporic writers explore the tension between their Arab heritage and the influence of Western culture, reflecting a fragmented sense of belonging. This struggle is deeply rooted in the colonial experience, as Bhabha explains "The Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization.... The social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged" (40-41). This sense of estrangement resonates with the broader Arab diasporic experience, where individuals navigate between two cultural spheres, often feeling disconnected from both. Through literature, Arab diasporic writers particularly Palestinians reclaim their voices, challenge historical distortions, and assert their right to identity, memory, and resistance in the face of exile and occupation. Their works serve as powerful expressions of cultural survival, resisting erasure and redefining what it means to belong in a world shaped by displacement and hybridity.

As Salhi and Netton comment: "A tragedy that makes the core of Mahmoud Darwish's poetical oeuvre, which continuously forces the world through the power of poetry to remember the involuntary travel of deportation, forced upon the Palestinians, rendering them

a nation in Diaspora" (2). This captures the emotional and historical depth of the Palestinian experience in diaspora, setting the tone for understanding Arab diasporic literature as a space of both memory and resistance.

In short, Arab diaspora writers often act as "cultural mediators between East and West, finding themselves as they did in the conciliatory position of being able, through the medium of English, to dispel misgivings about each culture and establish genuine intellectual rapprochement between the two traditions" (Maleh 4).

I.1.1. The Question of Palestine in Arab Diaspora Literature

The Palestinian loss began when powerful countries supported the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, ignoring the rights of the native population. Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* provides a critical analysis of the historical forces that led to this dispossession, emphasizing the role of Western imperialism and Zionist state-building in erasing Palestinian national identity, creating a protracted refugee crisis and ongoing occupation, fundamentally altering Palestinian existence. Said articulates this loss succinctly "Nevertheless, behind every Palestinian there is a great general fact: that he once and not so long ago lived in a land of his own called Palestine, which is now no longer his homeland" (115).

As Salhi and Netton state, "The Arab Diaspora is not solely made of Palestinians; it encapsulates all Arabs living permanently in countries other than their country of origin" (2). According to Edward Said, Arab Diaspora Literature serves as a counter-narrative, challenging Western representations of Arab identity and reclaiming cultural agency in a transnational context. Palestine holds a central place in Arab Diaspora literature, as Palestinian writers in exile use literature as a means of resistance and self-assertion. This literature is deeply shaped by political conflicts, particularly the Palestinian struggle, and serves as a tool to challenge dominant narratives and reclaim Palestinian identity on the

global stage. Zionism, as Said argues, "always undertakes to speak for Palestine and the Palestinians; this has always meant a blocking operation, by which the Palestinian cannot be heard from (or represent himself) directly on the world stage" (39).

Arab diasporic writers counteract this silencing by documenting Palestinian displacement and resistance. Naomi Shihab Nye, for example, uses poetry to preserve Palestinian memory and defy erasure, asserting the presence and resilience of her people through storytelling. Furthermore, the Palestinian experience in diaspora aligns with Said's critique of *Orientalism* as a "fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness" (204).

Edward Said's concept of imaginative geography in "Orientalism" helps contextualize the Palestinian struggle as both a political and ideological battle. Said argues, "Imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away." (55). This framework explains how colonial and Zionist narratives have constructed Palestine as an "othered" space, justifying occupation and displacement. By imposing boundaries between "civilized" and "uncivilized," Western discourse has reinforced Palestinian marginalization, erasing their historical presence and identity.

The recurrence of these narratives in Western media and academic discourse further entrenches Palestinian exclusion, making literary resistance all the more essential. In this context, Palestinian literature serves as a counter-narrative that challenges these imposed geographical and historical divisions. Works like *Men in the Sun* and *Mornings in Jenin* reclaim Palestinian identity by resisting the narratives that seek to distance them from their homeland. By portraying exile, dispossession, and resistance, these texts disrupt the

Orientalist framing of Palestine as an abstract, distant space and assert its reality as a lived homeland. Through storytelling, authors not only resist historical erasure but also reclaim their right to define Palestinian identity on their own terms. Thus, Said's concept of imaginative geography highlights how literature becomes a tool for reclaiming Palestinian identity and resisting historical erasure.

Palestinian diaspora literature resists these misrepresentations, presenting an authentic narrative of struggle, survival, and cultural endurance. As Suleiman affirms, "To be Palestinian is not to forget, nor to surrender this great heritage, not to kneel and resign to the tragedy of the Nakba. To be Palestinian is to resist the ravages of evil deeds, to insist on the restoration of rights and to plan for their restoration" (43). Therefore, the question of Palestine explores the ongoing struggle to assert Palestinian identity in the diaspora, addressing the political, historical, and cultural challenges faced by displaced Palestinians. Central to this struggle is the loss of homeland, denial of self-determination, and the complexities of maintaining identity in exile. Palestinian writers in the diaspora such as Susan Abulhawa, Diana Abujaber, Naomi Shihab Nye, engage with these themes by reflecting on their experiences of displacement and their efforts to assert identity outside of Palestine. Edward Said argues that Zionism has historically silenced Palestinian voices, stating that it "undertakes to speak for Palestine and the Palestinians; this has always meant a blocking operation, by which the Palestinian cannot be heard from (or represent himself) directly on the world stage" (39).

Similarly, Spivak examines how marginalized voices are often spoken for rather than allowed to speak for themselves, asserting that "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is interested in showing how the "third-world subject is represented within Western discourse" (118).

Through the lens of exile, Palestinian writers like Naomi Shihab Nye explore the complexities of identity, portraying the psychological and emotional struggles of displacement. In her poem "Two Countries", Nye writes, "Love means you breathe in two countries" (Nye, as cited in Lessen 15), capturing the emotional paradox of living between two worlds. This line represents the divided self of the Palestinian exile, illustrating the tension between past and present, and the difficulty of fully belonging to either place. The theme of emotional and cultural fragmentation in Nye's poetry aligns with broader narratives in Palestinian literature, where exile is often depicted as an unhealable wound. This is evident in the line, "Neither of his two languages can reach it... He was unable to report this tragedy to the news" (Al Mousa, Kitishat, and Almahasheer 121), highlighting the alienation and silence that accompany displacement. Frantz Fanon similarly argues that colonial oppression does not merely displace individuals physically but also inflicts deep psychological wounds. He states, "The truth is that colonialism in its essence was already taking on the aspect of a fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals" (249).

This suggests that displacement and exile are not only historical consequences but also ongoing psychological struggles, as the trauma of dispossession continues to shape identity and mental health. This longing for home, or *al-watan*, shapes the creative work of Palestinian writers like Naomi Shihab Nye, who navigate the tension between emotional attachment to their homeland and the reality of life in exile. This shows how exile becomes both a personal and collective wound that shapes identity, memory, and the will to resist (Nye).

In the same vein, this persistent trauma is further explored in Susan Abulhawa's *Morning in Jenin*, where the past is likened to a scar, a lasting mark on identity. She writes, "But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me" (137),

emphasizing how displacement is not merely a historical event but a lived, ongoing reality. The metaphor of the scar underscores how Palestinian identity is shaped by historical wounds that continue to affect future generations. Similarly, Naomi Shihab Nye explores the psychological impact of migration in *The Turtle of Oman*, where the young protagonist, Aref, experiences a deep sense of hesitation before leaving his homeland. The text states, "Aref's family encourages discovery, learning, and adventure but, now that it is time to leave, Aref's adventurous spirit falters" (Nye and Ganim). This hesitation reflects the inner conflict of migration, where individuals are torn between the excitement of new opportunities and the emotional weight of leaving behind the familiar. This struggle mirrors the experiences of many displaced Palestinians, for whom migration is not a choice but a necessity dictated by historical and political circumstances. Moreover, *Morning in Jenin* delves into the psychological trauma of exile through the character of Jolanta, who fears her son will one day discover his true origins. The narrator states, "She worried that someday he would find out that he was not really her son" (76). This moment reflects the fragility of identity and belonging, emphasizing the unspoken trauma that exile imposes on individuals and families. Furthermore, Abulhawa explores the burden of anger and resistance, encapsulated in the declaration, " I'll eat my fury and let it burn my entrails, but death shall not be my legacy" (249). Here, the internalized pain symbolizes the broader Palestinian experience, where resilience and memory serve as acts of defiance.

Significantly, the feeling of displacement is deeply felt in personal stories like Raja Shehadeh's *Strangers in the House*. He shares how exile shaped not just his surroundings but his sense of self, describing the sharp contrast between life before and after the Nakba: "What I am sure of is that my life then was shaped by the contrast between the meagerness of life in Ramallah and the opulence of life in the city across the hills" (9). His reflection shows how

political loss becomes personal affecting one's emotions, memories, and daily reality. When voices like Shehadeh's are read alongside Edward Said's historical critique, literature becomes more than storytelling; it becomes a form of resistance. It preserves memory, pushes back against erasure, and gives a voice to those who are often silenced. For Palestinian and Arab diaspora writers, this kind of writing is not just about the past it's about claiming space, identity, and dignity in the present.

These works tell their own stories to answer and resist Western and Zionist stories. In this way, they are not just remembering the past, but fighting back. This appears clearly in Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry, where writing becomes a way to keep identity alive.

By engaging with the above mentioned themes, Palestinian writers reclaim their history and assert their right to be heard, demonstrating that the *Question of Palestine* remains central to their creative and intellectual work. Their literature serves as both a testament to survival and an act of resistance, challenging erasure and ensuring that the Palestinian narrative persists despite displacement as this current study demonstrates.

As a central concern in Arab diaspora literature, the Question of Palestine highlights the resilience of a people determined to preserve their identity and heritage. Palestinian writers continue to resist the erasure of their history through storytelling, Palestinian writers use literature to express their identity, share their history, and resist oppression. Their stories challenge the way others portray them and ensure that their voices are heard. Through literature, they keep the memory of Palestine alive and show that exile is not just about losing a place but also about fighting to be recognized. Edward Said's critique of colonial discourse underscores the significance of this literary resistance. By reclaiming the right to narrate their own history, Palestinian writers reject external interpretations that seek to control their identity. Through literature, they assert self representation, dismantle imposed narratives, and

ensure that the Palestinian experience is neither forgotten nor distorted. In doing so, they challenge the mechanisms of colonial power that have historically sought to suppress their voices, reaffirming the role of storytelling as a means of both survival and resistance.

I.1.2. Concepts, Features, and Trajectories of Arab Diaspora Literature

Arab diaspora literature reflects the experiences of people who have left their homeland, whether by force or choice. It explores themes of identity, belonging, and resistance. Being away from home shapes how they see themselves and their connection to their culture. Their writing shows the struggle between keeping their traditions and adapting to new places. Important ideas like migration, cultural blending, and standing against oppression help us understand the challenges they face and how they stay connected to their roots. As Mahmoud Darwish poignantly expresses, "But I am the exile. Seal me with your eyes. Take me wherever you are. Take me whatever you are. Restore to me the colour of face And the warmth of body The light of heart and eye, The salt of bread and rhythm, The taste of earth... the motherland "(Darwish, qtd. in Salhi and Netton 1). This emotional longing reflects the exile's deep yearning to preserve their identity and return to their homeland, which remains central to the experience of diaspora.

In the context of Arab diaspora literature, diaspora refers to the displacement of individuals or communities from their homeland to multiple foreign regions, shaping their collective identity and cultural expression. As Cohen explains, "They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'centre' to two or more foreign regions" (23). This dispersion not only influences their sense of belonging but also informs the themes of exile, memory, and identity that characterize Arab diaspora literature.

I.1.2.1.Identity:

In Arab diaspora literature, identity is not a fixed concept but something that changes and develops over time, shaped by interactions with both the homeland and the host culture. It's a process, formed through negotiation, adaptation, and often confrontation between the self and others. As Layla El Maleh explains, "I am an Arab, alienated from American, sitting on the other side of that hyphen, alienated from language" (423). This highlights the fluid nature of identity in the diaspora, where cultural and linguistic barriers create a constant negotiation of belonging and difference.

I.1.2.2.Migration:

Within the framework of Arab diaspora literature, is a complex socio-political phenomenon involving the displacement and resettlement of individuals or communities due to conflict, economic hardship, or sociopolitical marginalization. It encompasses both voluntary and forced movements, often resulting in experiences of exile, identity reconstruction, and cultural hybridity. As Guibernau notes, migration is frequently met with ideological resistance, particularly when migrants are perceived as cultural or racial outsiders, reinforcing narratives of exclusion and otherness (77). In Arab diaspora literature, migration serves as a critical lens through which r of belonging, memory, and resistance are explored, highlighting the interplay between migration policies and the lived experiences of Arab diasporic communities.

I.1.2.3.Belonging:

In the context of Arab diaspora literature, can be academically defined as the complex and dynamic process through which individuals and communities navigate their cultural identities, emotional attachments, and socio-political affiliations in both their homeland and

host countries. It involves the negotiation of selfhood in relation to collective memory, historical displacement, and transnational ties. Guibernau highlights this notion, stating that "Belonging involves a certain familiarity; it evokes the idea of being and feeling 'at home' that is, within an environment in which the individual is recognized as 'one of us', he or she 'matters' and has an identity" (32). This definition aligns with the experiences of Arab diaspora writers, who explore themes of exile, identity fragmentation, and the search for a place of cultural and emotional rootedness in foreign lands.

I.1.2.4. Resistance:

In the context of Arab diaspora literature, is a multifaceted act of defiance against colonial, political, and cultural oppression. It encompasses both physical struggle and intellectual resistance, where literature serves as a medium to reclaim identity, challenge dominant narratives, and assert agency. As Fanon asserts, resistance involves legitimizing all forms of revolt, recognizing past struggles, and continuing the fight against systemic oppression. (207) In Arab diaspora literature, this resistance manifests through narratives that highlight displacement, historical memory, and the reassertion of cultural heritage, positioning literature as a tool for both political and existential survival. In "Resistance Literature" (1987), Barbara Harlow explores the role of literature as an act of political resistance, particularly among oppressed and displaced communities. She emphasizes that resistance literature does not merely document suffering but actively participates in the struggle against colonial and imperial forces. This is evident in her discussion of Mahmud Darwish's work, where she cites his statement, "Without a drop of blood the long roads would be featureless" (Harlow and Carter, 75), highlighting the necessity of sacrifice and struggle in shaping historical and national identity. In the context of Arab diaspora literature, this perspective underscores how literary narratives function as counter-discourses to

hegemonic histories, preserving cultural memory and articulating resistance against displacement and marginalization. Arab diaspora writers employ poetry and prose to assert identity, challenge dominant narratives, and reclaim agency, positioning literature as a vital tool in both political and existential survival.

In "Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature" (2009), Layla Maleh explores the complexities of identity formation and linguistic alienation within the Arab diaspora. She examines how hyphenated identities, such as Arab-American, embody a state of cultural negotiation, wherein individuals navigate tensions between heritage and assimilation. Maleh writes, "I am an Arab, alienated from American, sitting on the other side of that hyphen, alienated from language" (, 424), illustrating how language plays a crucial role in shaping diasporic identity. This notion is particularly relevant to Arab diaspora literature, which frequently portrays characters grappling with displacement, linguistic estrangement, and fragmented belonging. By highlighting the role of language in shaping diasporic identity, Maleh underscores how Arab diasporic writers articulate their experiences of marginalization and self-redefinition within transnational spaces. In "Belonging: Solidarity and Division in Modern Societies" (Guibernau, 2013), Guibernau explores the concept of belonging as a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their communities. She examines how belonging fosters a sense of familiarity and identity, making individuals feel "at home" within a social environment (32). In the context of Arab diaspora literature, this idea is particularly relevant as it reflects the struggles of migrants who navigate between their homeland and host society. The tension between cultural heritage and integration highlights the complex process of belonging, where identity is continuously negotiated in response to displacement and migration.

In conclusion, Arab diaspora literature plays an important role in showing how identity changes when people are forced to leave their homeland. It talks about important themes like migration, belonging, and resistance. Through the voices of Arab writers, this literature pushes back against dominant ideas and helps keep cultural identity alive. It also gives us a better understanding of the struggles of displaced people and how they deal with the challenges of living between different cultures.

I.2. Postcolonialism: A Theoretical Framework:

Postcolonialism, as a critical theory, examines the enduring legacies of colonial domination, extending beyond a mere historical period after colonial rule. It encompasses not only the historical resistance movements against colonialism but also contemporary struggles against imperialism, exploitation, and cultural subjugation. The theory scrutinizes how colonial systems of power continue to influence and shape identities, cultures, and global relations even after the formal end of colonial rule. By analyzing these lingering effects, postcolonial theory reveals how colonial ideologies have become deeply embedded within political, economic, and cultural structures, perpetuating inequalities and injustices that persist into the present day (Loomba 12).

Central to postcolonial theory is the idea that colonial ideologies and structures of domination persist long after formal decolonization. Colonial discourse, according to postcolonial theorists, has not only shaped historical power dynamics but continues to inform contemporary global relations. The postcolonial framework critically examines how the legacy of colonialism remains inscribed in modern-day institutions, discourses, and practices, sustaining the inequities that arose from colonial rule. This ongoing contestation challenges the persistence of colonial domination, aiming to dismantle the lasting impact of colonial rule

on both the colonizer and the colonized. One of the foundational concepts in postcolonial theory is Edward Said's notion of *Orientalism*, which explores how the West has historically constructed the East as a distant, exotic "Other". This construction of the Orient as a place of mystery and intrigue served to reinforce colonial power dynamics by positioning the West as the center of civilization and the East as its opposite (44). Said argues that this binary opposition was not only a cultural construction but also a political one, used to justify the West's dominance over the East. The West's portrayal of the East as inferior and exotic was designed to maintain a power imbalance, with the East being framed as something to be studied, controlled, and dominated. As Said states, For *Orientalism* was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (43).

Frantz Fanon's contributions to postcolonial theory further illuminate the violent impact of colonialism on the social, cultural, and economic structures of the colonized. Fanon argues that colonial violence is not only physical but also psychological, destroying the native's sense of identity and agency. However, this violence is eventually reclaimed by the colonized, who resist by taking control of their own history and identity. In Fanon's view, the colonized must overcome the imposed narratives of the colonizer and actively engage in the reclamation of their own subjectivity. This process involves the colonized reclaiming spaces that were once dominated by colonial power, symbolized by what Fanon refers to as the "forbidden quarters", where the colonized resist the colonial order and assert their autonomy (40).

After addressing resistance and identity in the colonial context, another important aspect of postcolonial theory is the issue of representation. The essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Spivak critically addresses the complex issue of representing marginalized and

oppressed groups, particularly subaltern women, within dominant colonial and postcolonial discourses. Spivak highlights the difficulties these women face in being adequately heard or understood within the frameworks constructed by the colonizers. She argues that they are often “insufficiently represented or representable,” meaning that their voices tend to be ignored or misinterpreted. As Spivak famously writes, “We can docket them, but we cannot grasp them at all” (21). This statement underscores the profound challenge of giving voice to the colonized within Western narratives, which frequently silence or erase their identities and lived experiences. The question posed by Spivak about whether the subaltern can truly speak reveals the inherent limitations of Western discourse in capturing the realities of colonized peoples.

In conclusion, postcolonialism as a theoretical framework critically examines how colonialism has historically shaped, and continues to influence, identities, cultures, and global power relations. It focuses on the persistent struggles of colonized peoples against the legacies of colonial domination, emphasizing key issues such as representation, power dynamics, resistance, and identity formation. Drawing on the contributions of theorists like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, postcolonial theory challenges enduring colonial ideologies and aims to dismantle the power structures that perpetuate inequality in the contemporary world.

I.2.1. Edward Said’s Thoughts on Resistance and Counter -Narrative:

A counter-narrative is a story that goes against the main or popular story. It gives a different point of view, usually from people who have been ignored or misunderstood. In Arab diaspora literature, writers use counter-narratives to respond to the wrong ideas spread

by colonial powers. They try to show the truth about their culture and identity. As Khoualed and Taiba say, "Counter-narratives aim at challenging dominant narratives and producing a different version of reality" (15).

Edward Said (1935–2003), a Palestinian-American scholar, is most famous for his book *Orientalism* (1978), a key text in postcolonial theory. In this book, Said explains how Western writers and artists created false images of the East to make it seem weak or strange. These images made it easier for the West to control and dominate. He shows how the West talked about the East as if it had no voice, while the West controlled the story. As he says, "In discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence" (208).

Said believes that resisting colonialism is not only through war or politics, but also through culture like literature and art. Writers and artists from colonized places use their work to fight back and correct the false images. In Arab diaspora literature, writers do this by telling their own stories and showing their real identity. They write to resist the wrong ideas and give a true picture of their people. In this way, they create Counter-Narratives that give power back to their voices and challenge the stories made by colonizers.

I.2.2. Gayatri Spivak's Postcolonial Feminist Perspective:

Gayatri Spivak is a key postcolonial feminist scholar, recognized for her work on the intersection of colonialism, gender, and power. Her most influential essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", questions traditional narratives that silence marginalized voices,

particularly women in colonized societies. Spivak argues that these women are often excluded from discourse, and their agency is overlooked in both academic and social contexts. She writes, "These women are insufficiently represented or representable in that narration. We can docket them, but we cannot grasp them at all" (21), emphasizing the challenge of fully understanding their experiences within dominant narratives. Spivak's concept of the "subaltern" refers to individuals who are marginalized and silenced, especially in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

These groups, particularly colonized women, are excluded from dominant conversations and lack the power to speak for themselves. Spivak argues that even after the end of colonization, these voices remain unheard because they continue to be ignored in the narratives created by those in power. Spivak further critiques the assumption that postmodernism represents a break from the past, asserting that it is, in fact, a repetition (317). She uses this framework to challenge Western feminism, which often overlooks the intersections of class, race, and colonial history in the lives of colonized women. Spivak highlights how Western feminism attempts to "save" these women without fully understanding their unique struggles within specific social, political, and cultural contexts. As she writes, "The concept of the native informant is redefined and repositioned as the 'woman of the South,' allowing her to be integrated into the discourse" (13). Spivak's work calls for a more nuanced approach to resistance, with emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the agency of the subaltern without romanticizing their struggles. Her theory encourages a deeper understanding of literary works, particularly through postcolonial and feminist lenses, by highlighting the complexities of voice and resistance within marginalized communities. This perspective challenges oversimplified narratives and fosters a more critical engagement with texts from these frameworks.

I.3. Arab Diaspora Literature as Postcolonial Literature:

Arab Diaspora literature refers to works created by Arab writers displaced from their homeland, often due to conflict, war, or political upheaval. These works explore themes such as migration, identity, belonging, and exile. Edward Said's observation, "Nevertheless, behind every Palestinian there is a great general fact: that he once and not so long ago lived in a land of his own called Palestine, which is now no longer his homeland" (115), captures the profound impact of displacement on identity. The sense of exile becomes central to the postcolonial experience, as individuals struggle to maintain their cultural identity while navigating the challenges of a new environment.

Postcolonialism in literature critiques how colonized people were represented and how these representations continue to affect their identity, culture, and politics. Key themes in postcolonial literature include resistance to colonial power, decolonization, reclaiming indigenous cultures, and challenging the legacy of colonial domination. It also examines how the "Other" is constructed by colonizers and the lasting effects of that construction on the colonized peoples. Diaspora literature explores the experiences of displaced peoples who navigate the complexities of maintaining their cultural identity while adapting to foreign environments. It often deals with themes of belonging, memory, displacement, and the tension between home and foreignness.

Said's quote, "To speak of scholarly specialization as geographical 'field' is, in the case of

Orientalism, fairly revealing since no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism" (50), reveals how Western colonial powers constructed knowledge systems that framed the West as the norm and the East, especially the Arab world, as the

"Other". This Eurocentric view not only distorted the representation of the Arab world but also justified colonial interventions and control. Colonialism profoundly affected Arab nations, particularly Palestine, by perpetuating stereotypes that painted the region as backward, violent, and mysterious. These representations marginalized Arab identities and cultures.

1.3.1. The Emergence of Palestinian Counter-Narrative

The displacement of many Arabs, especially Palestinians, due to colonial policies led to the formation of the Arab Diaspora. This diaspora literature seeks to reclaim Arab narratives, confront colonial stereotypes, and assert cultural identity. Through this literature, displaced Arab communities reflect on their exile and resistance, offering new understandings of their identity rooted in resilience and cultural pride. Contemporary Arab diaspora writers such as Ramzy Baroud and Sa'ed Atshan challenge the Western narrative surrounding Palestine and Palestinian identity. The alignment of Western liberalism with Zionism, as seen through figures like Niebuhr and Wilson, perpetuated the marginalization of Palestinians, rendering them as "nonpersons" within Western discourse. This hegemonic narrative reinforced colonial stereotypes and justified Palestinian displacement in favor of Zionist ideals.

By positioning Palestinians as "the Other", these portrayals contributed to the erasure of Arab agency, consolidating the colonial framework that underpinned Zionist expansion and the marginalization of Palestinian identity. In response to these colonial stereotypes, Arab diaspora writers like Baroud and Atshan offer authentic representations of Palestinian identity and experience. Baroud challenges the reductionist view of Palestinians by emphasizing the close-knit, communal nature of life in places like Beit Daras, where "everyone knew everyone else" and "there was never a need for certification" (15).

Such depictions resist the Western notion of identity, which often relies on external validation or bureaucratic processes. Through these portrayals, Arab Diaspora writers highlight the cultural survival of Palestinians and their ongoing political resistance, even in exile. These narratives offer a counterpoint to dehumanizing stereotypes, presenting Palestinians as a resilient people committed to maintaining their heritage and resisting colonial forces. Atshan's work confronts additional Western misconceptions, particularly regarding Palestinian society and homophobia. He states, "I reiterated that I am outspoken in condemning patriarchy and homophobia in my society" (71). This highlights the complexity of Palestinian identity and underscores the ongoing cultural survival and political resistance of Palestinians in exile.

Through such narratives, these writers reclaim their stories, offering nuanced perspectives that reject the oversimplified and distorted portrayals often seen in Western media. Writers like Baroud and Atshan focus on themes of identity, exile, and resistance by offering authentic portrayals of Palestinian life and struggles. Baroud emphasizes Palestinian self-determination and community, while Atshan challenges Western stereotypes about Palestinian society, particularly regarding homophobia. These writers work to preserve Palestinian identity and memory of the Nakba, advocating for the right of return and resisting colonial erasure. Their works serve as Counter-Narratives, challenging dominant Western discourses by presenting intimate, personal stories that defy mainstream media portrayals and affirm the ongoing cultural and political resistance of Palestinians.

In conclusion, Arab Diaspora literature plays a crucial role in resisting colonial and postcolonial narratives, especially the Western representations of Palestinians. Writers like Baroud and Atshan challenge stereotypes by offering authentic depictions of Palestinian identity, culture, and the struggles faced by displaced individuals. Their works assert the

importance of self-determination, cultural survival, and the preservation of memory, particularly regarding the Nakba. By presenting intimate and nuanced portrayals, they reject oversimplified and distorted representations in Western media, contributing to a broader movement that reclaims Palestinian identity and resists colonial erasure. These works are significant in postcolonial literature as they offer counter-narratives that challenge hegemonic discourses and contribute to reshaping global perspectives on Arab peoples, especially Palestinians.

I.3.1. Themes of Resistance and Defiance in Arab Diaspora Writings:

Arab diaspora writers, such as Ghassan Kanafani, challenge Western representations of the Orient, particularly Palestine, by confronting reductive and misrepresentative portrayals of Palestinians. Western media and historical narratives often depict Palestinians as either victims or terrorists, stripping them of agency and complexity. Instead, Kanafani presents deeply human portrayals of Palestinians shaped by memory, trauma, and exile. In *Returning to Haifa*, he writes: "Oh no, the memory did not return to him little by little. Instead, it rained down inside his head the way a stone wall collapses, the stones piling up, one upon another..." (149).

This vivid description reflects the emotional impact of displacement and the powerful connection to place and memory, directly challenging simplistic Western views.

Kanafani's works, for example, actively resist these narrow characterizations by portraying Palestinians as individuals with a deep connection to their land and culture, asserting their humanity and resilience in the face of oppression. In *Men in the Sun*, the question "Have you forgotten where you are? Have you forgotten?" (21) underscores the urgency of remembering the Palestinian struggle and their right to self-determination, challenging Western views that often overlook or simplify the complexities of Palestinian

identity and history. In the works of Palestinian diaspora authors like Raja Shehadeh, themes of resistance and defiance are intricately woven into their personal and collective narratives. The quote, "For a long time I was hostage to the memories, perceptions, and attitudes of others that I could not abandon. My sense of place was not mine" (2), encapsulates the internal struggle against colonial misrepresentation and imposed identities. Resistance, in this context, involves not only opposing the external forces that seek to erase or distort Palestinian history but also reclaiming agency over one's sense of self and place. Through their writing, Palestinian authors challenge the dominant Western narratives that frame Palestinians as victims or outsiders, instead asserting a complex, multifaceted identity rooted in heritage and history.

This act of defiance rejects the imposed identities, offering a Counter-Narrative that reaffirms the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, belonging, and connection to their homeland. Thus, Palestinian diaspora writers engage in a broader political and historical resistance that goes beyond storytelling, using their voices as a means to resist colonialism and assert the significance of their lived experiences and cultural heritage. "Would you have been willing to carry all your years on your shoulders and flee across the desert to Kuwait to find a crust of bread?" (Kanafani and Kilpatrick 24) reflects the complex interplay of resistance and defiance in the context of Palestinian displacement. This rhetorical question underscores the harsh realities of exile, where survival often seems to demand the sacrifice of one's identity and dignity (Kanafi and Kilpatrik 24).

Yet, beneath this struggle lies an act of defiance: by questioning the price of survival, the line challenges the imposition of refugee status and the erasure of Palestinian selfhood. The question implicitly resists the external forces that seek to strip Palestinians of their identity, showing that even in the most dire circumstances, survival becomes an assertion of

agency and resistance against oppression. Resistance and defiance, within the context of Palestinian identity and diaspora, represent the struggle against cultural erasure, displacement, and the trauma of exile. As Frantz Fanon notes, "Decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution" (35).

This shows the Palestinian fight for self-determination and recognition, emphasizing resistance against colonial domination and the reclamation of agency. In the works of Palestinian diaspora authors like Gassan Kanafani shows the ideas of resistance and defiance clearly in his stories, especially in his novels *Men in the Sun* and *Return to Haifa*. Kanafani's characters are often caught between the physical struggle of survival and the moral imperative to resist external definitions imposed upon them. Through their stories, Kanafani critiques Western narratives that have historically misrepresented Palestinian identity, offering a counter-narrative that reclaims the complexities of Palestinian heritage. By reshaping Palestinian identity, these authors resist not only the political forces of colonialism but also the psychological effects of exile. Their works serve as a form of resistance that goes beyond storytelling, engaging with the politics of identity and history to assert Palestinian agency and preserve cultural heritage in the face of historical erasure. Many scholars have examined Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry as literature of resistance. For example, Tamadour Al Mousa, Amal Riyadh Kitishat, and Muneerah Badr Almahasheer, in their study "Storytelling of Palestinians' Experience in Diaspora: Cultural Differences and Identity in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry", explore how Nye employs storytelling as a means of resisting colonial oppression and expressing Palestinian identity. Their research highlights how her poetry evokes themes of exile and displacement, shedding light on Palestinian suffering through poetic narration and vivid imagery (Al Mousa et al. 220). Similarly, Klara G. Van Lessen, in "Negotiating Contested Identities: Palestinian American Identity in Poems by Lisa

SuhairMajaj, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Susan Abulhawa", examines Nye's poetry as a tool of resistance against colonialism. She illustrates how Nye portrays exile and displacement, emphasizing the suffering of Palestinians through narrative and imagery (van Lessen 51). While previous studies have analyzed Nye's poetry in the context of resistance, my research will focus specifically on *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan*. These two poems serve as powerful counter-narratives that challenge dominant historical discourses. By closely analyzing their themes, imagery, and language, this study will highlight how Nye asserts Palestinian identity, depicts resistance, and critiques colonial oppression.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said critiques how the West has historically constructed the East, particularly the Arab world, as an exotic "other" to reinforce its own superiority. Said explains, "*Orientalism* was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (44). This division between the West and the Orient was not just a cultural or geographical one, but a political strategy used to justify and perpetuate colonial domination. By depicting the East as mysterious, primitive, and inferior, Western scholars and writers legitimized the idea that it was their duty to "civilize" the Orient, thus justifying the violence, exploitation, and control that accompanied colonialism. Arab diaspora writers challenge this constructed vision by rejecting the binary opposition between the West and the East. They refuse to accept the stereotypes and distorted representations of the Arab world. By telling their own stories and exploring the complexities of identity, culture, and history, they aim to reclaim the narrative from colonial and Orientalist perspectives. These writers challenge the reductive nature of *Orientalism* by presenting the Arab world as multifaceted and dynamic, not confined to the stereotypes imposed by Western discourse. In doing so, they offer a counter-narrative that resists colonial and Orientalist ideologies, emphasizing the agency and resilience of the people and cultures they represent.

I.4. Naomi Shihab Nye: A Palestinian Voice from the Arab Diaspora:

Naomi Shihab Nye (born March 12, 1952, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.) is a Palestinian-American poet, writer, and educator. Her work reflects her bicultural background and explores themes of identity, displacement, and cultural connection. She plays an important role in representing the Arab diaspora and offers a counter-narrative to dominant Western portrayals of Arab identity. Nye was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother. At age 14, she moved with her family to Jerusalem but returned to the U.S. a year later due to rising tensions. She later earned degrees in English and world religions from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

I.4.1. Overview of Nye's Style, Themes, and Contributions :

Nye is a prominent voice in Arab diaspora literature, known for her exploration of identity, displacement, memory, and survival. As a Palestinian-American poet, she gives voice to the struggles of exile and belonging, reflecting the resilience of displaced communities. Her poetry often bridges personal and collective experiences, capturing the emotional and cultural weight of diaspora. Through her works, Nye highlights the importance of preserving heritage and resisting erasure, making her a vital figure in contemporary literature.

Her literary works include poetry, essays, and children's books. Her young adult novel *Habibi* (1997) tells the story of an Arab-American family adjusting to life in the West Bank, while *The Turtle of Oman* (2014) explores migration and belonging. She has also written poetry collections such as *Different Ways to Pray* (1980), *Fuel* (1998), and *Transfer* (2011), as well as *19 Varieties of Gazelle* (2002), which responds to post-9/11 Islamophobia. Nye has taught at various universities, including the University of California, Berkeley, and Texas

State University. She has also traveled to the Middle East and Asia to promote cultural understanding through literature. She served as the poetry editor for *The Texas Observer* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Her contributions to literature have earned her many awards, including multiple Pushcart Prizes, the Academy of American Poets' Lavan Award (1998), and the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature (2013). She was a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets (2010–2015) and served as the Young People's Poet Laureate (2019–2022) ("Naomi Shihab Nye"). Through her work, Nye continues to share personal and cultural stories, challenging stereotypes and promoting understanding between diverse communities. As a poet of the Arab diaspora, Nye's work frequently explores themes of exile, displacement, and cultural memory. Her poetry serves as a bridge between her Palestinian and American heritage, allowing her to address complex issues of identity and belonging. By weaving personal narratives with broader historical and political realities, she challenges dominant representations of Arab identity in Western discourse. Her writing is not only an act of storytelling but also a form of resistance, ensuring that the experiences of marginalized voices are preserved and recognized. Nye's accessible language and narrative style make her work deeply relatable, enabling readers to engage with pressing social and historical issues through intimate human experiences. Her poetry does not merely reflect nostalgia for a lost homeland but actively reimagines and reconstructs the concept of "home" within the context of diaspora. Scholars highlight her ability to depict themes of loss and resilience with nuance, offering a perspective that is both deeply personal and universally relevant (Al-Samman 25). Through her literary contributions, Nye reshapes Western literary portrayals of Palestinian identity, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and ensuring that the voices of the Arab diaspora are heard. Her unique position between two cultures allows her to challenge

stereotypes, promote empathy, and create a space where personal and collective histories intersect.

Nye's works frequently address the themes of identity and displacement, exploring how individuals cope with exile and the quest for belonging. In *The Turtle of Oman*, Nye delicately explores "the emotional tug of leaving behind a beloved home", as Aref grapples with the complexities of moving to a new country. This displacement is not just a physical transition but an emotional one, where Aref seeks solace in his grandfather's wisdom and the idea that "home can be carried within, like a turtle with its shell" (Roser 139). Nye uses this metaphor to illustrate how, despite the external changes and challenges of exile, individuals can preserve elements of their identity, finding a sense of belonging within themselves even as they navigate unfamiliar environments. Through this, Nye highlights the resilience of the human spirit in the face of displacement and the continuous search for a place to call home. In "You and Yours", Nye explores the themes of resistance and defiance through the portrayal of individuals who reject the circumstances they face. The quote illustrates this resistance, as the man on South Flores "will not accept food from anyone", defying the charity offered to him, and the woman, showing her doctor's picture of lungs, states, "it looks worse than that burned house we left," a defiant acknowledgment of the harsh realities she endures. Through these characters, Nye demonstrates how individuals, despite their struggles, resist being defined or diminished by their situations, asserting their autonomy in the face of adversity (Nye 13).

In *Habibi*, Naomi Shihab Nye explores the theme of memory and survival through the personal and emotional experiences of the characters facing displacement. Liyana's reflection on leaving her belongings behind symbolizes the deep connection to home and identity that people often lose when forced to move or adapt to a new environment. Nye writes, "The

piano; the blue bicycles; the boxes of tangle-haired dolls Liyana hadn't played with in years, though she refused to give them away; the mountains of books; the blackboard on an easel where she and Rafik left each other notes... Who would they be if they had to start all over again?" (Nye 5). This quote highlights the struggle of starting anew while grappling with the memories of the past and the challenge of maintaining one's sense of self amidst the changes and disruptions of life.

Nye's poetry is an important part of Arab diaspora literature. She writes about identity, exile, memory, and survival. Her poems show the pain of being away from home and the deep need to belong, especially from a Palestinian point of view. Through her writing, she keeps the Palestinian story alive and gives voice to people who are often ignored. Nye's poetry speaks against forgetting, and she shows the real and complicated lives of people in the diaspora. Her work connects personal stories with bigger ideas of cultural strength and resistance. In the end, her poems remind us how powerful literature can be in protecting and expressing identity. This part gave an overview of the main themes in Nye's poetry. In the next part, I will look closely at her poems and explain how she uses these themes to talk about Palestinian identity and resistance.

Conclusion:

Chapter One provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding Arab Diaspora Literature by exploring its historical and theoretical context. The chapter delves into the complexities of the Arab diaspora, highlighting the crucial role of displacement in shaping identity, culture, and belonging. It successfully defines the Arab diaspora and examines the question of Palestine within diaspora writings, showcasing the powerful ways in which the Palestinian struggle is woven into the broader narrative of exile and resistance. The chapter also outlines the key features and trajectories of Arab diaspora literature, emphasizing themes

such as memory, nostalgia, and the ongoing search for a sense of home. By situating Arab diaspora literature within the framework of postcolonial theory, it demonstrates how writers engage with issues of resistance, identity, and representation. Through the exploration of Edward Said's theory of resistance and GayatriSpivak's postcolonial feminist perspective, the chapter illustrates how these theoretical lenses are vital to understanding how Arab diaspora writers challenge hegemonic power structures and express marginalized voices. Furthermore, the chapter's discussion of themes like resistance, defiance, and the Palestinian struggle highlights the ways in which Arab diaspora literature functions as a tool for confronting colonial histories and asserting cultural identity. Naomi Shihab Nye is presented as a key figure in this literary tradition, offering a unique perspective on the diasporic experience, especially through her exploration of themes of belonging and the tensions between multiple identities. In sum, this chapter establishes the essential theoretical and historical context for analyzing the contributions of Arab diaspora writers. By framing the discussion within the concepts of postcolonialism and diaspora, it lays the groundwork for further exploration into how these writers navigate the complexities of exile, identity, and resistance.

Chapter-II Resistance and Defiance in Naomi

Shihab Nye's Poetry

Introduction:

This chapter provides a critical analysis of Naomi Shihab Nye's poems *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan*, focusing on how they reflect Palestinian identity, displacement, and resistance. In *Blood*, Nye draws on personal memory to explore her Arab-American roots and the confusion of growing up between two cultures. Meanwhile, *Before I Was Gazan* gives voice to the collective pain of Gaza's people, using poetic expression to resist silence and erasure.

Through a postcolonial lens, this study examines Nye's use of literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, and tone to challenge dominant Western representations of Palestinians. Her poetry does not only convey suffering but also reveals strength, cultural continuity, and a deep attachment to homeland. By analyzing the interplay between personal and collective experience, the chapter shows how Nye turns poetry into an act of defiance and cultural resistance.

The analysis is guided by Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* and Gayatri Spivak's concept of the Subaltern, both of which help frame Nye's poetic voice as one that reclaims identity and speaks from the margins. Throughout the discussion, academic sources will support the argument and illustrate how Nye's work contributes to the broader discourse of postcolonial resistance.

II.1. Resistance and Identity in Nye's Selected Poems

II.1.1. "Blood": Synopsis

The poem *Blood* tells the quiet yet powerful story of a young girl trying to understand who she is as a Palestinian growing up in America. Through tender memories and everyday images, Naomi Shihab Nye brings us into a world where identity is formed not just by words, but by family, tradition, and small acts filled with meaning. The speaker remembers her

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father catching flies with his bare hands and talking about the healing powers of watermelon scenes that seem simple but are rich with pride and cultural connection. Things shift when a neighbor knocks, asking to see "the Arab". That moment lingers. It leads to a conversation with her father, who explains that their family name, "Shihab", means "shooting star" a name borrowed from the sky. It's beautiful, but it also hints at something fleeting, something that might be lost.(Nye).

As the poem goes on, the tone changes. The speaker feels the weight of war and helplessness. The line 'I wave the flag of stone and seed' shows her quiet pride in whoshe is. It's not about politics, but about staying true to your roots and memories.(Nye) Her father, once full of answers, now struggles with the news. Even words don't make sense to him. The speaker, asking ' What does a true Arab do now? '(Nye), realizes that identity is not something fixed. It's something we carry, question, and sometimes fight for.

Through this personal lens, Nye touches on the broader experience of Palestinians in the diaspora. Her poem gently pushes back against the kind of narrow, harmful images Edward Said criticized in *Orientalism*, where he writes that *Orientalism* is "a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness" (204). Nye resists this reduction by reclaiming narrative through intimate storytelling, cultural symbolism, and honest emotion giving voice to an identity often misrepresented or ignored.

II.1.1.1. The Portrayal of Palestinian Identity in "Blood": The Palestinian Heritage in Diaspora:

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Nye's *Blood* tells the story of a girl trying to make sense of what it means to be Palestinian especially while growing up far from home. It begins with a simple yet striking moment: someone asks to "see the Arab", and she replies, "we didn't have one" (Nye). Just a few words, but they reveal how disconnected she feels from her roots.

That feeling starts to shift when her father tells her, "Shihab means shooting star", It's a small line, but it lights something inside her a link to her name, her heritage, and something bigger than herself. This moment echoes Edward Said's idea that identity, especially in postcolonial contexts, is shaped not only by how others define us but also by how we choose to remember and reclaim who we are (39).

As the poem moves forward, the world outside starts to feel closer This means that the speaker no longer sees the world as something far away, but something that is directly affecting her. The speaker says, "Today the headlines clot in my blood", The news is no longer distant. it's personal, painful, and real. But even her father, with his two languages, can't explain it. She feels the silence (Nye). That silence speaks to what Gayatri Spivak calls the "subaltern" the people whose voices are often lost or ignored in dominant narratives (118).

Her question "What does a true Arab do now?" isn't just about identity. It's a cry. A need to understand what role she can play in a world that often erases or distorts where she comes from (Nye). This shows how she feels lost and is searching for her place in a world that doesn't fully recognize her identity.

Nye pushes back against the way the West often talks about Palestinians as either victims or statistics. Instead, she offers something softer and more human. Her father's sayings and small memories become a way of holding on. When she writes, "True Arabs

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believed watermelon could heal fifty ways", it's not just poetic it's love, memory, and culture all in one. It's a quiet form of resistance (Nye).

The poem's free verse makes it feel like someone thinking out loud no strict structure, just emotion flowing naturally. Lines like "Today the headlines clot in my blood. A little Palestinian dangles a truck on the front page" spill into one another, the way memory and trauma often do. The style matches the message: there are no clean lines in exile(Nye).

She repeats the phrase "true Arab" three times. It feels like she's trying to find the answer through repetition, through remembering. Her father says, "A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands". It might sound playful, but it holds something deeper a connection to small traditions and the wisdom they carry (Nye). This could be about things like patience, being careful, and focusing on the small details in life, which are important parts of the old traditions.

In the end, the poem doesn't give answers. It leaves us with questions: "Who calls anyone civilized?" and "Where can the crying heart graze?" These aren't just questions they're resistance. They refuse to accept the world's labels. They ask us to look closer, to feel more, to listen better (Nye).

II.1.1.2. Symbolism:

In *Blood*, Naomi Shihab Nye uses symbols to talk about Palestinian identity and pain. The word *blood* is not only about family ties. When the speaker says, "the headlines clot in my blood", it means that the news and violence in Palestine are not far away, they are inside her. It shows how the Palestinian struggle becomes part of the body and soul." Blood" becomes a symbol of how this pain is passed from one generation to the next, and how it shapes identity.

Also, the father's saying, "True Arabs believed watermelon could heal fifty ways", is not just funny. It shows the beauty and wisdom of Arab culture. These small sayings carry memory and pride, especially in a world that forgets or erases them.

Even the name "Shihab", which means "shooting star", is symbolic. It shows how Palestinian identity is fragile like a star it can disappear, but while it shines, it is beautiful and strong. Through these symbols, Nye keeps Palestinian stories alive and shows how even simple things can carry deep meaning.

II.1.1.3. Tone:

The tone in *Blood* moves from quiet confusion to growing clarity. At first, the speaker denies her identity "I said we didn't have one" when asked if they had "an Arab", This hesitation shows how internalized fear and external pressure distort self-perception (Nye). The tone is one of suppressed identity.

Later, the poem grows introspective and firm. The speaker asks "When we die, do we give it back?" and her father answers, "You are your father's blood." , This shift marks a reclaiming of identity. The tone becomes assertive, filled with pride and reflection. Phrases like "homeless fig" and "clot in my blood" mix sorrow and strength, showing emotional conflict and the lasting impact of displacement.(Nye)

II.1.2. "Before I Was Gazan": Resisting Loss and War:

The poem *Before I Was Gazan* follows the story of a young boy whose life is violently disrupted by war. Through the voice of this child, Naomi Shihab Nye offers a

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deeply personal glimpse into how conflict instantly erases the simplest aspects of daily life school, dreams, and even one's name. The boy, once focused on his homework and identity as a student, finds his world turned upside down in a moment of bombing. This personal loss stands as a symbol of the broader Palestinian experience, where childhood and normalcy are constantly interrupted by violence. Nye's choice to center the voice of a child amplifies the emotional impact of the poem and highlights the injustice of such a stolen life(Nye).

The erasure of the boy's daily reality echoes Edward Said's reflection: "Nevertheless, behind every Palestinian there is a great general fact: that he once and not so long ago lived in a land of his own called Palestine, which is now no longer his homeland" (115). This quote captures the core of the boy's transformation. In the poem, he is no longer simply a student he becomes a witness to loss, a voice of survival, and a symbol of a displaced people. His lost homework becomes more than paper it becomes the proof of a life interrupted, a future denied.(Nye).

By showing how personal memories vanish in seconds, Nye underlines the collective trauma of Palestinians, yet she does not stop there. Through this child's voice, she resists silence. Instead of presenting him solely as a victim, she gives him the strength of memory and the dignity of expression. The tone of the poem shifts from sorrow to quiet defiance proof that identity endures even under siege. In doing so, Nye allows the subaltern, in Spivak's terms, to speak not through theory, but through poetry rooted in lived experience.(Nye)

Commenting on "the believe in our own story" as Ney once said in an interview with Francesca D'annunzio, *Before I was Gazan* comes as a reaction to Ney's overthinking about a group of Gazan kids she delivered lessons on the importance of the story in writing.

However, directly after one of the sessions," there was a horrible , genocidal bombing of Gaza" ("Texas Observer").

II.2. Literary Devices and Poetic Techniques as a Vehicle of Representation: Palestinian Resistance and Cultural Survival:

II.2.1. Symbolism and the Palestinian Culture in "Blood":

In *Blood*, Naomi Shihab Nye uses symbolism as a powerful poetic tool to represent the resilience of Palestinian identity and culture. One of the most striking symbols in the poem is the watermelon. The line "True Arabs believed watermelon could heal fifty ways" transforms the fruit into a symbol of cultural endurance. In Palestinian culture, the watermelon has historically been associated with land, harvest, and even political resistance especially after the Palestinian flag was banned. People used the colors of the watermelon (red, green, white, and black) to represent their identity. So, the watermelon in the poem becomes a quiet but strong symbol of survival and national pride (Nye).

Another important symbol is the speaker's last name, Shihab, which means "shooting star". The father says, "a good name, borrowed from the sky", This connects the speaker to something greater. A shooting star appears briefly, but it shines brightly in the dark. This shows that Palestinian identity may seem fragile or threatened, but it still shines and survives. It also reflects the experience of many Palestinians living in exile always moving, not fully settled, but still proud of who they are. The poet's full name is Naomi Shihab Nye, so her own name is also part of this symbol. It shows her personal link to heritage, beauty, and movement.

Nye also uses contrast and emotional language to show resistance. For example, the simple childhood image "catch a fly in his hands" is placed next to the painful reality "a little Palestinian dangles a truck on the front page". This contrast shows how violence enters everyday life and steals the innocence of children.

Another strong image is "the flag of stone and seed". The stone refers to the "Intifada" the Palestinian uprising where people, especially young people, resisted the occupation by throwing stones. The seed means life, growth, and hope. Together, these words show that resistance is not only about protest, but also about continuing life and keeping the culture alive. This metaphor shows that survival itself can be a form of resistance.

As Frantz Fanon says, "resistance involves legitimizing all forms of revolt, recognizing past struggles, and continuing the fight against systemic oppression" (207). Nye's poem shows this idea, not through shouting or fighting, but by remembering the past, protecting identity, and turning pain into poetry.

Through symbols, metaphors, and emotionally charged language, Nye portrays the Palestinian struggle not as a mere political issue, but as a deeply human and cultural experience. Her poetry transforms simple images into tools of remembrance and resistance, challenging both silence and erasure. Nye's *Blood* explores themes of identity, resistance, and cultural defiance through the Palestinian experience. The poem begins with a childhood lesson from the speaker's father, highlighting Arab resilience. Symbols like watermelon and the speaker's name, Shihab connect her to her cultural heritage.

II.2.2. Imagery

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In *Blood*, Nye employs vivid imagery to portray the trauma of exile and the persistence of cultural identity under oppression. One of the most striking images appears in the line, "a little Palestinian dangles a truck on the front page", This image juxtaposes innocence with violence: a child often symbolizing hope is reduced to a news item, stripped of agency, dangling like a broken object. The truck, typically a toy, is now framed in a context of destruction, war, and media spectacle. This reflects how the Palestinian experience is often dehumanized and consumed from a distance.(Nye)

The phrase "headlines clot in my blood" intensifies this emotional burden *Blood*, usually linked to life, becomes saturated with grief and violence. This metaphor transforms personal pain into a collective one; the speaker's very body carries the trauma of the homeland(Nye). As Fanon argues, "resistance involves legitimizing all forms of revolt, recognizing past struggles, and continuing the fight against systemic oppression" (207). Nye's poetic imagery resists the normalization of suffering by reclaiming emotional and cultural depth through language.

Furthermore, the speaker asks, "What flag can we wave? I wave the flag of stone and seed", Here, imagery is used symbolically to express resistance. Stones represent the Intifada, acts of physical defiance, while seeds symbolize regeneration and rootedness in land. The "flag" made of natural elements defies imposed national boundaries and asserts a uniquely Palestinian form of identity and survival(Nye).

As Maleh explains, literature written by exiled Arabs often reflects "hybridity, double consciousness, and the longing for return" (8). Nye's imagery embodies all three. The father's silence, the child on the front page, and the speaker's mourning voice together create a visual and emotional map of a fragmented, yet defiant, Palestinian self.

II.2.3. Free Verse and Enjambment as a Reflection of Exile's Experience

The poem *Blood* follows the emotional journey of a speaker caught between personal memory and inherited trauma. It begins with nostalgic images tied to cultural wisdom "A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands" and then gradually transitions into reflections on displacement and exile.

Nye uses free verse (poetry without a regular rhyme or meter) to reject traditional poetic structures. This reflects the disorder and instability of life in exile.

This lack of rhyme or meter reflects the disintegration of homeland, culture, and language what this means is that because the poet doesn't follow traditional forms, it mirrors how being in exile breaks apart the connection to one's homeland, culture, and even language (Nye).

She also uses enjambment, which is when lines continue without a natural pause or punctuation. This mirrors the speaker's experience of exile, her life is fragmented but continues despite this. For example, in the line "Today the headlines clot in my blood", it's not just about feeling sad. It shows that violence has become part of her own identity, and she feels it in her body.

This reinforces the idea that exile doesn't end at borders; it penetrates the body and psyche this means that being in exile doesn't only affect where someone lives but also how they feel and think. The effects of exile are deep and personal (Nye).

The father's silence also reflects this trauma. The line "Neither of his two languages can reach it... He was unable to report this tragedy to the news" (Al Mousa, Kitishat, and Almahasheer 121) shows how he can't express his pain. This reflects how many Palestinian voices are silenced.

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His inability to speak is a form of resistance through stillness, he refuses to speak in a world that doesn't represent the truth of his experience. This means his silence is a way to resist the misrepresentation of Palestinians in the world.

Thus, the form of the poem itself becomes a form of defiance. By breaking away from regular poetic rules, Nye expresses a reality that cannot fit into traditional Western poetry forms. This shows how she is asserting her Palestinian identity outside of what is imposed on her. Her form becomes her resistance, and the way her lines are broken reflects both survival and resistance against the fragmentation caused by displacement (Nye).

Thus, the poetic form itself becomes a tool of defiance. By breaking away from rigid structure, Nye expresses a reality that cannot be contained within Western poetic norms, reflecting a postcolonial assertion of identity outside imposed forms. Her form becomes her resistance, and her fragmented lines reflect both survival and resistance against fragmentation itself.(Nye)

II.2.4. Repetition:

The poem *Blood* tells the story of a speaker who struggles with her Palestinian-American identity, torn between wanting to belong and carrying the collective memory of loss and displacement. Naomi Shihab Nye uses repetition to emphasize themes of cultural continuity and resistance. She repeats phrases like "True Arabs" and "my father would say" to show how identity and wisdom are passed down from one generation to another. These repetitions help us understand how cultural memory and knowledge are kept alive, even though exile makes it hard to stay connected to the homeland (Nye).

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The line "But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me" shows that history, especially painful history, stays with us. The scar is not just a physical mark, but also a symbol of the ongoing pain and strength of the Palestinian people. This line suggests that the past cannot be forgotten; it stays with us in our bodies, our memories, and our identity (Nye).

When Nye repeats something, it's not just for the poem's beauty. It reminds us of survival and resistance. For example, "A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands" might seem simple, but saying it again makes it more meaningful. It's not just about a skill; it shows how being strong, careful, and flexible helps people survive when they are far from home. (Nye)

So, the repetition in the poem is more than just a literary tool; it's a form of defiance. By repeating important phrases, Nye connects the speaker to her heritage and strengthens her cultural identity, even in the face of loss and displacement.

II.2.5. Rhetorical Questions

The poem *Blood* uses rhetorical questions to confront and question Western conceptions of civilization and identity. For instance, Nye asks, "Who calls anyone civilized?" This question challenges the idea of who holds the power to define what is considered "civilized." (Nye) According to theorists like Hall and Du Gay, rhetorical questions like these shed light on how identities are often constructed in opposition to definitions imposed by dominant powers (4). Through this question, Nye forces readers to critically examine the power structures that shape representations of Palestinian suffering and identity.

Another rhetorical question, "What flag can we wave?" not only questions the symbolic power of flags in identity construction but also probes the loss of national and

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cultural markers in exile. It reflects the speaker's struggle with displacement, identity, and the survival of cultural memory. Additionally, Nye uses the question, "What does a true Arab do now?" to voice not only personal confusion but also collective trauma. The speaker's inability to find solace in "either of his two languages" reflects the fragmented identity of diasporic Arabs, who struggle to articulate their loss in the language of the oppressor. (Nye)

By questioning the validity of Western portrayals of civilization, Nye asserts the resilience and complexity of Palestinian identity. The poem's use of rhetorical questions and repetition builds a resistance against colonial narratives that misrepresent Palestinian experiences. It also highlights the significance of memory, culture, and identity in resisting external impositions and misrepresentations.

II.3. Fragmentation and the Struggle between the Experience of Exile and the Homeland in "Before I Was Gazan":

Before I Was Gazan tells a heartbreaking story through the voice of a child. At first, the child is focused on something simple finding a lost homework paper. He feels proud, excited to make his teacher happy. But very quickly, everything changes. The war takes away not only the paper but also the people around him his uncle, his teacher, even a baby. This sudden shift from normal childhood moments to deep loss is what makes the poem so powerful (Nye)

The speaker's voice is full of innocence. He doesn't speak about politics or war directly, but we feel the weight of it in his words. His world is shattered, and now he says, "I would do anything for a problem I could solve". This simple line holds deep meaning. It

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shows how powerless he feels in a world full of destruction. He wishes for a math problem a small thing he can control instead of the chaos he's living in (Nye)

This sense of sudden loss and confusion reflects what many Palestinians experience. As the daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother, Nye often reflects on questions of exile and belonging in her poetry. In this poem, the speaker longs for a time before conflict shattered their world, showing how personal identity is shaped by larger historical, political, and social forces. Cohen explains that displacement involves being uprooted from a central homeland and scattered into unfamiliar places, which deeply affects one's sense of identity and belonging (23). This demonstrates that exile disconnects people from their roots and identity. Here, the speaker no longer knows where he belongs. Before the war, he was just a boy with dreams. Now, he is called "Gazan", a name that carries pain, loss, and the burden of a national struggle. Stuart Hall and Du Gay also argue that identity is shaped by contrast by what it is not (4). The child once knew himself through small joys like school and family. Now, those things are gone, and he's left trying to understand who he is in a broken world (Nye).

The poem is an act of remembering, and in that, it becomes a form of resistance. Fanon said that resisting colonialism includes holding on to memory (207). This child's voice, even if quiet, fights against being forgotten. Said also spoke about how the East is often made invisible in Western narratives (208). But Nye gives this child visibility, a voice that demands to be heard.

The fragmented structure of the poem mirrors the emotional and physical fragmentation caused by war. The short lines, the lack of punctuation, the disorganized thoughts all reflect the speaker's inner state. He is trying to hold on to something, anything that reminds him of peace and normal life.

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The poem captures the fragmentation felt by the Palestinian diaspora, as the speaker reflects on life "before" becoming Gazan, illustrating how identity is closely tied to a lost homeland. This idea is echoed in Hall and Du Gay's argument that identities are formed through contrast and defined by what they are not (4). The tension between past and present selves emphasizes the complexity of Palestinian identity. Nye's poem also reflects Frantz Fanon's concept of resistance, which involves both rejecting colonial domination and remembering historical suffering (Fanon 207). From this perspective, "Before I Was Gazan" becomes an act of resistance against colonial narratives that attempt to erase Palestinian identity. This aligns with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, which critiques how the West portrays the East as inferior and powerless (Said 204).

Nye pushes back against these colonial depictions by affirming Palestinian identity and cultural survival in the face of displacement. The poem's fragmented structure mirrors the broken experience of exile moving from childhood innocence to a sudden loss of normal life. The speaker's search for a missing homework assignment shows this feeling of confusion and loss. It also reflects what Homi Bhabha calls "hybridity", where identity becomes unclear and people feel lost between two cultures (40–41). This helps us understand how exile affects the speaker's sense of self.

Even though Nye doesn't use obvious symbols of Palestine like olive trees, she uses something more personal: a missing paper. That small object becomes a powerful metaphor. It's not just a school paper it's a symbol of all that has been lost. Spivak's idea of the subaltern those who are always silenced can be felt here too (13). The boy speaks, but the world may not be listening. Still, he speaks anyway. That is defiance. (Nye)

Guibernau notes that displaced people don't just lose land they lose visibility and meaning in society (77). This child is holding on, trying not to disappear. And in that effort, there is strength. (Nye)

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So, *Before I Was Gazan* is not just a poem about war. It's about memory, identity, and quiet resistance. It reminds us that even in the smallest voices, like a child looking for homework, there is truth, and there is power.

II.3.1. Free Verse and Lack of Rhyme or Punctuation:

Nye uses free verse with no rhyme or punctuation to reflect the chaos and urgency of exile. The poem doesn't follow any regular structure, and this mirrors the speaker's confused thoughts and feelings after losing his home and normal life. This disorder in the poem helps readers feel the same confusion and sadness. For example, the line "everything got subtracted in a minute" is short in length but heavy in meaning, it shows how fast everything was taken away. The absence of punctuation makes the poem feel like a flow of emotions without pause, which shows the speaker's pain and inability to stop and understand what happened (Nye).

This writing style supports the theme of resistance. Instead of following traditional poetic rules, Nye breaks them to reflect how exile destroys order. But through telling his story, the speaker resists being forgotten. He turns his pain into words and memory. As Shehadeh explains, displaced people often become "hostage to memories, perceptions, and attitudes that are not entirely their own" (2). In this poem, the speaker fights to take control of his own story. In the same way, Abulhawa writes, "I'll eat my fury and let it burn my entrails, but death shall not be my legacy" (249), showing how pain can become power. Both writers show that even in suffering, there is strength, and they refuse to let the Palestinian story be erased.

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By using a poetic form that breaks rules, Nye shows that even in a broken world, people still resist. Her poem becomes a form of resistance a way to show that Palestinian voices and stories continue to exist and must be heard.

II.4.The Use of Language as a Tool of Resistance:

In *Blood* and *Before I Was a Gazan*, Naomi Shihab Nye employs language as a powerful means to preserve memory, assert identity, and resist cultural erasure. In *Before I Was a Gazan*, the child recalls simple memories—homework, a teacher, an uncle—that symbolize a life shattered by war. The line "everything got subtracted in a minute / even my uncle even my teacher" emphasizes the sudden loss and the role of memory in holding on to identity. Here, language becomes a vessel that carries what remains of the self. As Spivak explains, when marginalized voices are silenced, storytelling allows them to reclaim agency and narrative control (317).

In *Blood*, phrases such as "A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands" express inherited cultural pride. Yet the question "What does a true Arab do now?" signals the trauma of displacement and the erosion of cultural identity. By embedding cultural references in her poetry, Nye resists the loss of Palestinian heritage. This aligns with Fanon's view that reclaiming one's voice is central to resisting colonial domination (40).

Through both poems, Nye transforms language into an act of resistance—preserving memory, affirming Palestinian identity, and challenging forces that seek to silence or erase it.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter has examined Naomi Shihab Nye's *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan* through a postcolonial framework, focusing on the themes of resistance, identity,

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and displacement. By utilizing literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, and tone, Nye constructs a powerful counter-narrative that challenges Western representations of Palestinians and emphasizes the importance of reclaiming cultural identity. The poems reflect the trauma of displacement, the erasure of Palestinian voices, and the resilience of those living in exile. Nye's work aligns with postcolonial theories, particularly the concepts of resistance and defiance articulated by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Frantz Fanon, highlighting the role of literature in amplifying marginalized voices and preserving cultural memory. Ultimately, Nye's poetry stands as a testament to the enduring strength and agency of the Palestinian people, offering a compelling narrative of resistance against colonial and postcolonial oppression.

General Conclusion

This research has explored the role of Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry as a Counter-Narrative of resistance and defiance within Palestinian and Arab diaspora literature. By examining *Blood* and *Before I Was Gazan* through postcolonial and feminist lenses, this study has demonstrated how Nye's work challenges dominant Western representations of Palestinian identity, displacement, and struggle.

The first chapter established the historical and theoretical foundations of Arab diaspora literature, outlining key themes of resistance, identity, and defiance. It provided an overview of postcolonialism and feminist critiques, drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* and GayatriSpivak's postcolonial feminist perspective. This theoretical framework allowed for a deeper understanding of how Nye's poetry fits within the broader tradition of Arab diaspora literature as a form of postcolonial resistance.

The second chapter provided a detailed analysis of Nye's selected poems, illustrating how her use of symbolism, imagery, and language constructs a Counter-Narrative that reclaims Palestinian identity and cultural memory. The study highlighted how Nye's poetry gives voice to personal and collective trauma, while also emphasizing resilience, defiance, and the preservation of Palestinian heritage. The intersection of personal and political narratives in her work reinforces the broader struggle for representation and self-determination.

Ultimately, this research has contributed to the field of Postcolonial and feminist literary studies by emphasizing the power of literature as a tool for resistance. Nye's poetry not only challenges dominant narratives but also asserts the significance of storytelling in preserving cultural identity and defying oppression. By examining her work within the context of Palestinian resistance literature, this study underscores the enduring role of poetry in shaping counter-discourses and amplifying marginalized voices in contemporary discourse.

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