

DIFFERENT WINDOWS
ON THE SAME LAND:
PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS

Thesis submitted to the
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in

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by

Seher ÖZSERT

Fatih University

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For all those who do not give up their hope in exile

APPROVAL PAGE

Student : Seher ÖZSERT
Institute : Institute of Social Sciences
Department : English Language and Literature
Thesis Subject : Different Windows on the Same Land: Palestinians and
Israelis
Thesis Date : May 2013

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Barry Charles THARAUD
Head of Department

This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Lucie TUNKROVA
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assist. Prof. Dr. Lucie TUNKROVA

Prof. Dr. Barry Charles THARAUD

Assist. Prof. Dr. Carl Jeffry BOON

It is approved that this thesis has been written in compliance with the formatting rules laid down by the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet KARAKUYU
Director

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The English Language and Literature graduate program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:

i) Research Methods course during the undergraduate study

ii) A comparative approach to world literatures including novel, poetry and film studies, and analysis of the literary theory and several theorists as well as several critical approaches that have contributed to this thesis efficiently.

iii) The thesis is consisted of the analysis of the two main sources including one novel and one film discussed by comparison, and the secondary sources, particularly theoretical books and scholarly articles from variety of journals.

Seher ÖZSERT

May, 2013

ABSTRACT

Seher ÖZSERT

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DIFFERENT WINDOWS ON THE SAME LAND: PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS

This thesis focuses on how Palestinians and Israelis demonstrate the trauma of real and imagined exile. Through analysis of the book *The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolán and the film *Lemon Tree* by Eran Riklis, my aim is to illustrate how the past memories of Palestinians and Israelis build an invisible barrier between the two nations, how the loss of the idealized homeland and the following trauma cause both nations to accuse the Other for their own miseries, and how, nevertheless, they seek to escape from the sufferings of exile. First, the thesis analyses the concept of the Other and how prejudice builds hatred by hindering the dialogue of the two nations. Second, the trauma of losing the homeland and its idealization are discussed through the experiences of the main characters of the novel and the film, Bashir, Dalia, Ahmad, Salma, and Mira. It is also analyzed how their displacement is symbolized by the lemon tree, house, and wall. Finally, the optimism of both works is examined when the Open House for Palestinian and Israeli children in the book and the newly growing lemon trees both in the book and in the film symbolize peaceful future co-existence of the two nations on the same land that they both desire to own.

Key words:

Exile, Diaspora, The Other, Dialogue, Idealized Homeland, *The Lemon Tree*, Israelis, Palestinians, Past Memories, Hope

KISA ÖZET

Seher ÖZSERT

Mayıs 2013

AYNI TOPRAKLAR ÜZERİNDE FARKLI PENCERELER: FİLİSTİNLİLER VE İSRAİLLİLER

Bu tez, Filistinli ve İsraililerin gerçek ve hayali sürgünlerinin travmalarını nasıl yansıttıkları üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Sandy Tolan'ın *Limon Ağacı* kitabı ile Eran Riklis'in *Limon Ağacı* filminin analizi ile, amacım Filistinli ile İsraililerin geçmiş anılarının nasıl iki ulus arasında görünmez bir bariyer oluşturduğunu, idealleştirilmiş anavatanlarının kaybının ve bunu takip eden travmanın nasıl her iki ulusun da kendi ızdıraplarından dolayı Ötekini suçlamalarına yol açtığını, ve bütün bunlara rağmen, onların sürgünün acılarından kaçış arayışı içerisinde olduklarını göstermektir. İlk olarak, bu tez Öteki kavramını ve önyargının nasıl iki ulus arasındaki diyalogu engelleyerek nefret inşa ettiğini analiz eder. İkinci olarak, anavatanı kaybetmenin travması ve bunun sonucu olarak anavatanın zihinlerde idealleştirilmesi, romanda ve filmdeki ana karakterler olan Bashir, Dalia, Ahmad, Salma ve Mira'nın deneyimleri ile tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca, onların yerinden edilmelerinin nasıl limon ağacı, ev ve duvar ile sembolleştirildikleri analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak, kitapta Filistinli ve İsraili çocuklar için kurulan Açık Ev ve hem kitap hem de filmde yeni büyüyen limon ağaçları iki milletin de sahip olmak istedikleri aynı topraklar üzerinde barış içerisinde birlikte yaşamaları için iyimserliğin sembolü olarak incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Sürgün, Diaspora, Öteki, Diyalog, İdealleştirilmiş Anavatan, *Limon Ağacı*,
İsraililer, Filistinliler, Geçmişin Hatıraları, Umut

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INTRODUCTION

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

Edward W. Said also comments on exile’s origin: “Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you” (“Reflections on Exile” 184). According to Said, exile means feeling oneself in more than one place. This situation gives a feeling of uneasiness by affecting one’s life and consciousness. Said names this situation as “being not quite right and out of

place" (*Out of Place* 295). Exile is not only a sense of loss but also includes many more traumatic experiences: "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" ("Reflections on Exile" 173).

As a multifaceted experience, exile is analyzed in many ways according to the diasporas of different cultures. The severity of the condition depends on where the culture stands. In the Jewish and Palestinian cases, both nations have experienced exile. Although their exile took place in different times and for different reasons, their fate meets at one point. Therefore, Jews and Palestinians' experiences of exile are interconnected, which Said states as the worst of all: "Perhaps this is the most extraordinary of exile's fates: to have been exiled by exiles – to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles" (178). In the analysis of the Palestinian diaspora, the suffering part is not only related to the Palestinians because the Jews are also haunted by "the ghosts" of their own diaspora. With the unpleasant memories of exile, past and present diasporas of these two nations come together on a land where Palestinians are being exiled by the stronger nation, Israelis. It is a rule in most multicultural societies that the stronger one is successful in dominating the identity and in ruling the other nation within the diaspora.

Vijay Mishra contends that the Jewish diaspora is different from the general conception of diasporas as many of them returned to Israel, which is according to Zionist belief accepted as their homeland given to them by God.

On the contrary, the Palestinian diaspora is a typical one as they did not return like the usual diasporas (Mishra 2). The settlement of Jews in Palestine has caused the exile of Palestinians, and has resulted in both real and psychological displacements by changing the lives of many Palestinians by either forcing them to leave their homelands in Palestine or driving them to live as strangers on their native lands within the borders of historical Palestine. They have not been fully removed from their homeland; many of them live on a part of their land. From that point, the two nations perceive each other as the Other and troubles come after this prejudice among the in-between individuals.

The restlessness of exiled societies caused by the displacement is the reason of creating the unwanted Other. Homi K. Bhabha illustrates the point: "The 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" ("Narrating the Nation" 4). As Bhabha mentions, it is in human nature to create the Other, there is not much necessity for looking far away. Human nature is liable for it and only a force is necessary to start this distancing with prejudices. The loss of homeland and the miseries that are believed to be caused by the Other are forces dragging exiled people into the traumas of displacement by building hatred against the Other.

The most visible effect driving Palestinians and Israelis into this displacement is their past, which is imagined as full of good memories. As their lives have changed in ways they do not wish, they hold on to their memories. There is no possibility to reach the homeland and the memories in

it that they have created in their imagination, so they cling to their best dreams. The inaccessibility of this idealized past and homeland becomes a barrier between Palestinians and Israelis, because they think that their unhappiness is the Other's fault. Therefore, there exists a lack of communication and understanding between the two nations. This gap disables them to build good relationships with each other as neighbors or friends and it even nourishes hatred against each other.

They justify this enmity again by their memories. They want to live in the place they accept as their homeland, so they try to do anything they can to obtain it. All the memories of the homeland are sweet for them, but when they harm others in order to live on it again, it becomes a bitter experience. The same land both Palestinians and Israelis claim is full of sour-sweet memories of exile. The book *The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolan describes this situation from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives. Similarly, the film *Lemon Tree* by Eran Riklis includes Palestinian and Israeli national voices from the perspective of exile caused by social and political problems of the two nations. Both the book and the film prove that the happy memories of the past before the existence of the Other and the trauma caused by being far away from the idealized paradise of homeland, hinder the dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis by bringing them both into imagined and real exile. Those beautiful memories of an idealized past ruin the characters' lives and force them to blame the Other, which drives away the possibility of realizing true memories instead of clinging to more fantasies.

CHAPTER 1

THE OTHER WITHIN DIASPORA

Bhabha describes the attitudes of nations towards each other within the diaspora as a situation where

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

In human life, the existence of the Other is inescapable in every society. In a multicultural society, as Bhabha notes, the problem is the negative point of view even reaching hostility by labeling the other nation with accusing expressions and attitudes. These prejudices and sometimes approaches bearing superiority over the other are huge obstacles hindering the dialogue and coexistence on a multicultural land. The book *The Lemon Tree* is an example for this demanding struggle of two nations on the same land, Palestinians and Israelis. The negotiation of differences causes problems in this society as Bhabha analyzes more: "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (*The Location of Culture* 3). Both nations have justice on their sides, there is not any total guilty side, but one's happiness means the

misery of the Other. They have many common things that meet on the border of their own wishes, which is shown via both Palestinians and Israelis' own perspectives throughout the book (Pressman 440). This situation of Palestinians and Israelis is affirmed by Said in his study of *Orientalism*. Actually, when their histories are questioned, these two societies have similar experiences of Orientalism, both as Jewish and Arab societies: "That anti-Semitism and, Orientalism resemble each other very closely is a historical, cultural, and political truth that needs only to be mentioned to an Arab Palestinian for its irony to be perfectly understood" (*Orientalism* 27-8). Jews escape from their exile and death, where they were the Other, and they start a new life in Palestine by making another nation the Other and putting them into the same diaspora they have experienced.

A nation's lifestyle is under threat of the Other in almost any diaspora, in which the Other is mostly the majority, and for them, the majority in the foreign land is the danger. However, in the Palestinian diaspora, the majority of Palestinians as the natives of the land have been turned into the minority by the coming Jews. Therefore, Palestinians have become the weak side disrupting the settled Jews that have gained power over the land: "The partial minority culture emphasizes the internal differentiations, the 'foreign bodies', in the midst of the nation" (Bhabha, "Culture's in Between" 57). In the Palestinian and Israeli cases, the suppressed group is the Palestinian society which is turned into the Other by the community that was once the Other in another land. In the film, Salma Zidane is a lonely woman who only survives through the help of her past memories with her father and family. Her life

changes after Israeli Defense Minister Israel Navon and his wife Mira Navon move next to her house. While the Navons are giving a party for their friends, they pick up lemons out of Salma's grove without permission. Their action reveals the right that they give to themselves as the stronger side, however, being the stronger group does not mean that they take all decisions and they have the right to control the other group. In a multicultural land where there are unequal powers, like Israeli and Palestinian situation, it is mostly the wrong perception that the dominant community feels the right to take the decision within the borders of the Other's private life as observed in the film.

Mishra raises the concern about the question frequently asked by the oppressors about diaspora, which may cause terrible consequences: "What shall we do with them?" (18). Ironically, Jews were asked the same question in their exile before, by foreign nations, and now they ask this very same question about Palestinians. The oppressed nation at the beginning of the book, Jews, who are escaping from death, turn into oppressors. The existence of this situation drives both Palestinians and Israelis to construct their own identities based on recent experiences. The difference between the two nations is the creator of their identities as cogently described by Stuart Hall:

Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive

outside that the “positive” meaning of any term – and thus its “identity” – can be constructed. (4-5)

This difference is known as “hybridity” in Bhabha’s term and he describes it as “in-between reality”:

...a hybridity, a difference “within”, a subject that inhabits the rim of an “in-between” reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive “image” at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (*The Location of Culture* 19)

In the book, Bashir Al-Khayri and Dalia Ashkenazi Landau are in-between individuals of this diaspora. Bashir is the son of a Palestinian family exiled by the coming Israelis who escape death in Europe and Dalia is a daughter of a family that settles down in the empty house abandoned by Bashir’s family. The idea of their happiness actually depends on the understanding of each side, if one side welcomes the Other, then celebration of hybrid life on a unique land becomes possible. When Bashir and his friends stand in front of the door, when they come to see their old houses which is now owned by Israeli families, they know that their wish is up to the Other: “Everything depended on the reception, Bashir told himself...‘It depends,’ he said, ‘who is on the other side of the door’” (Tolan 30). Even though Bashir and his company have a life in exile divided with a border, they want to pass this border and reach their homeland. No matter how much they want to see their homes, their wishes depend on the current owner of their

houses. It is a fortune for Bashir that Dalia is the person behind the door of their old house, she even welcomes them with relieving words: “You are welcome. Come in, feel at home” (Tolan 225). Dalia is such a thoughtful host, however, these expressions are also ironic for Bashir, “It was a universal welcome – Make yourself at home – yet these particular words seemed especially strange to Bashir as he approached the front door: Feel at home” (225). Bashir is glad for such a welcome, but still he feels that there is something wrong in this welcome, as his family owned this house for many years.

Dalia is one of the unique characters who overcomes the obstacles of communication between two nations by welcoming an Arab to her house and being a friend to him. Bashir’s friend Yasser wants to see his house, but he is not as lucky as Bashir. All they want is just to see their old houses, but, very different from Dalia’s attitude, the woman who owns Yasser’s house now screams: “If you don’t leave the house, I will call the police!” (29). This woman is shown as an example of intolerance against the Other. She might remember her sufferings in the past and her anger is caused by the fear of the possibility of losing her house. Therefore, she chooses to escape from the reality of her past and she does not want to accept that her house was once the property of another family.

Palestinian people do not welcome the migration of Israelis to the land of Palestinians, as it is very clear from the lives of the characters in the book. Palestinians in the book question this situation of their being exiled and they try to understand why they should be the cure for the other nation’s miseries

by sacrificing their lands and lives: “Why, they asked, should their homeland become the solution to the Jewish problem in Europe?” (89). Israelis end their miseries in exile and start a new life on the land of Palestinians in the book, but Palestinian people are not happy with giving their own lands and houses. Bashir and his family are exiled together with other Palestinian people and turned into the Other by Israeli people who force them to leave their lands and settle on their lands.

If some people start to involve the term ‘the Other’ in their lives, this means the beginning of chaos in the society, because this term brings otherness, conflicts and all the problems among cultures. If the situation comes to the differences in identities within the borders of one land, there will be fights and as a result of them, powerful and powerless sides will exist. The idea of living together in peace regardless of the differences then disappears and the society will separate into unequal powers: “If the identity of the society becomes an issue-one that cannot be regarded as trivial and, so, a matter of indifference-conflict over it can only become more bitter, particularly since some will be regarded as winners and others as losers” (Kukathas 693). When the situation comes to the winners and losers, there exist inaccessible walls like I and the Other:

The boundaries between the Israeli “I” and the Palestinian “other” are vague and are separated functionally into two levels: First, the Palestinian “other” is separate from the Israeli “I” on the level of culture and identity but not so entirely external as to constitute an independent subject. Second, the Palestinians are

the “other” within the Israeli “I” whose presence being unavoidable, must therefore be coped with. (Jamal 50)

Like Dalia and Bashir, other Palestinians and Israelis have a unique life on their multicultural land, however the existence of I and the Other do not give a peaceful life to both nations. Bashir’s family has a perfect life before Israelis’ arrival. They have everything they want to be happy on this land; a good family, a respected name, happy children and a well-built house with a lemon tree in its garden. Similar to this Palestinian family, Israeli people have a similar paradise land in their dreams and they have good intentions for arriving there. Dalia and her family, together with many other Israeli families, escape from death and come here to start a new life.

These two families want happiness in their lives, but some concepts like happiness, love and war carry different meanings. When the war has broken out between Palestinians and Israelis in the eighth chapter of the book, two families understand almost opposite things from the war announcements: “To Bashir and his family, words like these meant the enemy would be vanquished and the family would return home. To Dalia and her family, the words meant what they said – annihilation” (Tolan 210). The reason for this difference is very clear, Bashir and his family are the oppressed side and if they win the war, it would be the announcement of their freedom. Their success would open the doors of their native lands and they would not live as exiles anymore. On the other hand, Dalia and her family have a comfortable life in this land as they are on the powerful side. Losing the war means losing the power they have and going back to be

oppressed again. In their past, they had the danger of annihilation, and they do not want to live the same experiences by being moved from the houses that they now claim to possess. Therefore, both families/ nations use opposite connotations: “What Israel called terror, however, Bashir often saw as legitimate resistance” (Tolan 250). As their perspectives are different, they perceive the incidences according to the role given to them. Bashir and his friends try to protect their rights as the oppressed Palestinians; meanwhile, Israelis accept all these actions as attacks on their territory by Palestinian side.

In this multicultural society, the people are inclined to protect their local identities against the Other. From both sides, the usage of the term the Other and negative attitudes towards each other are inescapable. In this sense, similar to the discussions in the book *The Lemon Tree*, the other literary source the film *Lemon Tree* also includes the concept of the Other in almost similar multiple ways of life with a different story. Again, there are national conflicts caused by multicultural obligations within Palestinian diaspora. The main character Salma has a life that is made the Other by her Israeli neighbors who have the power and the authority over the land where she lives. She is not exiled like Bashir and his family, but her environment forces her into a life in psychological exile. In the film, as understood from Salma’s past, she was happy once. However, at present, Salma has nothing good except the lemon grove, which is almost taken from her in the end. Throughout the film, she struggles to get rid of being the Other from the perspective of Israelis, but she is ignored as a Palestinian individual. Salma

seeks a way out of her imagined exile that she creates in her mind, but she is not very successful no matter how hard she tries. Her neighbor Mira has a similar psychological mode even though she is the wife of a powerful minister. Power or money does not make any difference in this case; Mira is trapped inside her house within the walls around her. Actually, it is her nation or her husband building the wall in front of her house, however, she feels uncomfortable with this situation. Although she is on the powerful side and has any right she wants due to her husband, she lives a similar displacement to Salma. As Mira understands Salma's condition and feelings, she wants to talk to her or to be friend with her if possible, but the past and present memories creating an invisible wall between them do not permit this union.

Both in the book and the film, the problem of the Other can also be seen within the symbols representing Palestinians' and Israelis' memories on the same land. The Palestinian and Israeli families imagine having happy lives before the coming of the Other or when they do not think about the Other, but if their roads cross each other, their sufferings start in their mind. There are a great number of moments while one family is suffering and the other is exulting at the same time. The most prominent instance is right after the announcement of the end of the war between Palestinians and Israelis. After this announcement, Bashir and Dalia's reactions are completely the opposites:

On the morning of Wednesday, June 7, Bashir and his family woke up to a city under military occupation [...]. Bashir was in shock from the surreal and the familiar [...]. In 1948, Bashir

thought, we lost 78 percent of our land. And now all of Palestine is under occupation. The taste was bitter and humiliating. (Tolan 217)

While Bashir and his family are mourning because of the sad results for their nation, in the same way, Dalia and her family are celebrating these news: “In the evening, Dalia gathered her family and began to dance [...]. Solia and Dora and Stella and Dalia swayed through the open house, out to the yard, past the jacaranda and the lemon tree, laughing and weeping” (218). They are the laughing side as winners, but the old owner of the lemon tree is grieving. The existence of the lemon tree witnesses both happiness and sufferings of the main characters, Bashir and Dalia, and their families. It can be a symbol of sweetness and also a symbol of sourness in these characters’ lives.

In the book, the concept of the Other enters both Israelis and Palestinians’ lives at a very early age through the misinformation about each other. Israeli children are raised with stories about Arabs: “In school Dalia had learned that the Arabs had fled like cowards, with their hot soup still steaming on the table” (27). They could not know the reality as they are children and they did not question this story earlier, but they were raised with this wrong knowledge, which derives from Said’s concept of the oriental standpoint: the Other. As Dalia states in the book, the idea about Palestinians is given to many Israeli children through the textbooks as the defeated Other, so they have a kind of prejudice against Palestinians:

Dalia's textbooks report that they run away, deserting their lands and abandoning their homes, fleeing before the conquering Israeli army. The Arabs, one textbook of the day declared, "preferred to leave" once the Jews had taken their towns. Dalia accepted the history she was taught. Still she was confused. Why, she wondered, would anyone leave so willingly? (Tolan 182)

Together with other children, Dalia believed that Palestinians escaped before them and Palestinians are the weak Other as they could not stand the powerful Israeli army. Nevertheless, she questions their history several times in the book as this story seems strange to her: "As a younger child, she hadn't questioned this story, but the older she got, the less sense it made: Why would anyone voluntarily leave such a beautiful house?" (27). This questioning is actually necessary not to grow the wrong judgment about the people with whom they have never had a real conversation or meeting in their lives.

Palestinian children are also raised with biased views about the Israeli, they learn that "The Jews expelled us; we have a right to return" (161). Besides this knowledge, they repeat every day the anthem "Palestine is our country":

Our aim is to return
Death does not frighten us,
Palestine is ours,
We shall never forget her.

Another homeland we shall never accept!

Our Palestine, witness, O God and History

We promise to shed our blood with you! (Tolan 161)

As a child grown with this ideology, it is very normal for Bashir to seek ways to get his country back. Bashir is also deeply affected by the stories told him by his father, Ahmad Khairi, about their house and the perfect life they had according to his father's imaginations. These stories from his past are very important both for Bashir and the children like him in shaping their world views, as Juliane Hammer states: "For those Palestinians who were born and raised in exile, these memories are their connection to Palestine — their source of knowledge, attachment, and national identity" (43). Bashir strongly believes that with his family he can return to this fairy tale life he creates in his mind. For both Palestinian and Israeli children who have such damaging knowledge about the Other, it is hard to become friends. Furthermore, it is really normal for them to be enemies and perform violence against the Other. Dalia and Bashir question the ideologies and succeed to see both sides of the story. If all Palestinians and Israelis could communicate with each other openly like Dalia and Bashir do, there may not be so many problems in both the book and the film. Dalia and Bashir are good examples of courageous characters stressing the importance of communication in understanding the Other with whom they share a life. They are the hope seeking characters to get out of the trauma caused by the concept of the Other as analyzed in the following sections.

CHAPTER 2

TRAUMATIC EXILE:

REAL AND IMAGINED DISPLACEMENT

But I am the exile.
Seal me with your eyes.
Take me wherever you are —
Take me whatever you are.
Restore to me the color 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.
Shield me with your eyes.
Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrow;
Take me as a verse from my tragedy;
Take me as a toy, a brick from the house
So that our children will remember to return.

Mahmoud Darwish

(qtd. in Said, "Reflections on exile" 179)

Darwish's lines perfectly reveal the sorrow of being in exile. Peters describes exile's nature in any type as a tragedy due to the painful separation from homeland, which "generally implies a fact of trauma, an imminent danger, usually political, that makes the home no longer safely habitable" (19). In exile societies, it is notably common that the traumatic experiences are caused by the existence of the Other as explained in the previous chapter. These varied exile experiences enable us to identify these societies' lives, their sufferings and national hopes on the homelands they have lost:

Exile and diaspora are the antithesis of home and homeland.

The traumatic loss of the homeland strengthens the connection

of refugees and exiles to the homeland, and it continues to play an important role in their individual and collective imagination, constituting a central aspect of their self-definition. (Hammer 50)

The strong ties that exiled people have with their homelands increase the degree of their trauma caused by being out of reach to there. The situation of Palestinians and Israelis is the example of two nations whose lives carry the burden of exile interdependently. In the two works, both nations' traumatic experiences of exile and happy memories of their past hinder their dialogue.

The history of these two nations, Palestinians and Israelis, is very clear from the characters' lives in the book and the film. Jews have no other choice but to own the land offered to them after escaping from the horrors of the war. However, because of their arrival to Palestine, some Palestinians were forced to move from their homes, some of them continued living in their own homes in Palestine and in some parts of land that is left in today's Israel. Even though those people stayed in their homes, they have had to live a mental exile on their own land. No matter whether they have left their homelands or not, the mutual problem for Palestinians is their separation from the old days. According to Ashcroft and Ahluwalia:

Exile does not mean the total separation from your place of origin but is rather a condition where one never abandons the old nor completely accepts the new. It is not a state in which one can become complacent, comfortable and secure. Rather,

it is a state that hones your skill for survival. (qtd. in Schulz and Hammer 13)

Palestinians and Israelis have this situation of being uncomfortable with their old and new lives from their own perspectives, because “all diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way” (qtd. in Mishra 1). There are prominent characters in the book showing their own unhappiness within their diaspora. Ahmad, Bashir’s father, is haunted by the ghosts of his past, he could not make a new start as his conscious is so busy with the past memories and the sufferings of exile. Talking about diasporas, Mishra points out this issue: “They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements” (1).

Ahmad carries the real displacement in every step of his life and he could not concentrate on his new life in a different location. On the other hand, Salma, the Palestinian woman living within Israeli territory in the film, has a restless life due to her loneliness and her Jewish neighbors. The common problem in both works is all characters’ need to end this feeling of displacement as Nico Israel verifies, “Displacement begs the question of emplacement. It demands a sense of place” (Introduction 15). Most of the characters are similar in both works in the way of not forgetting the past as a time full of good memories and living the present life in chaos to search for a place of their own. The reason for this is that they idealized the past as if a paradise that has never existed or never going to exist because it lives only

in their memories and fantasies. It is true that Bashir's family was happy together or Salma was also happy with her father and family, however, being far away from the past makes it much more wonderful than it really was. This paradise life is unreachable, so it becomes invaluable, which is very similar to the dream of Israelis in diaspora about their homeland. Even though many Jews have never lived or seen Israel, they all have the same dream of going to this imagined homeland which is like a paradise. The reason why they cannot agree with each other is that both nations endeavour to reach an unreal world created by them as 'our home'.

Although Salma lives in her homeland, the outside conditions force her to live like a diaspora as she is seen as the Other by Israelis, according to the term Susan Pattie coined, she is "at home in diaspora" (qtd. in Hammer 218). Therefore, she misses her past and wants to return those times when she was living in comfort and her nation was the only owner of the land. Her homeland is an imagined diasporic one on which she could not have rights because of the stronger nation, Israelis. Mishra describes this discourse: "Diasporic discourse of the homeland thus represents a return of the repressed for the nation-state itself, its pre-symbolic (imaginary) narrative, in which the nation sees its own primitive past" (9). In her imaginary narrative, Salma's lemon grove is her past and she can return to her memories only through it. Salma's life turns into a kind of deserted place as everybody in her family leaves her and she is forced to be separated from her last bounds to her past, the lemon grove. Margeret Morse argues that "It is hard to imagine a life capable of imagination and sympathy that is not

anchored by sense of memories” (69), hence it is impossible for her to have a life without her memories and she struggles not to lose her land which is the last tie between Salma and her past. Her memories are so important, because she has nothing else as valuable as them in her present life. Keeping her memories alive within her land is the only reason for her holding on to life.

Jewish diaspora is a different one as they carry the original trauma of displacement to each place they move. In the book, actually, Dalia’s family escapes from their homes that they had been living for many years in Europe to a place they had never lived, but they acknowledge this new place as the historical motherland and as a return to their origins. This part is similar to the Palestinian idealized homeland, because Dalia and her family are among those Israelis who created this imagined homeland that many of them had never seen before. The reason for this imagination is again the same way of escape from their chaotic life by giving them a hope or a reason to live. Otherwise, all their miseries would be meaningless and without purpose. They do not return to the real memories of the past like typical diasporas because they do not have such a real place, but they imaginarily construct their history on the land of Israel. However, the diasporization of Palestinians on this historically imagined land gives damage to Jewish diaspora as Mishra states: “the model of the Jewish diaspora is now contaminated by the diasporization of the Palestinians in Israel and by the Zionist belief that a homeland can be artificially reconstructed without adequate regard to intervening history” (11). The creation of Palestinian diaspora give away to

the idea that Jewish people did not end their diasporic lives, they migrated from one in-between land to another, not to a new place of their own (Mishra 17).

Mishra evaluates homeland as a fantasy scenario that makes the nation dream of itself as a unique society. Indeed, this homeland fantasy is connected to the trauma of leaving the motherland (6). Ahmad shows this sign of fantasies by dreaming about the past - beautiful memories and imagining to live them again one day. The sign of trauma including within the fantasies is removal from their lands for Palestinians, on the other hand, the trauma for Jews is escaping from death, which stands for the similar things: "the moment of 'rapture' is transformed into a trauma around an absence that, because it cannot be fully symbolized, becomes part of the fantasy itself" (7). The absence of something may cause the trauma by creating fantasies about it; moreover, there is a strong possibility of hosting some symbols representing one's exile life.

As obvious in all the fantasies representing Palestinians and Israelis' pasts, history is a very important issue in the lives of people in exile as a follower and shaper of their future. There is a combination of past and present in the characters' lives in *The Lemon Tree*, this analysis

therefore, operates through the dimensions of time and history, and space, both geographical and the Other, third space of cultural reconceptualization, the reordering of the world through forms of knowledge reworked from their entanglement in

longstanding coercive power relations". (Bhabha qtd. in Young
66)

In *The Lemon Tree*, most characters carry their pasts like unavoidable burdens. As the Arabs in the novel live in exile and the Jews carry their memories of exile with them, history symbolises their misery and happiness. They have happy and sad memories that shape their present and future lives. Bashir's family never forgot their past and house, similar to Dalia's family who always remembered the bad circumstances of their escape and happiness in their house in Palestine. Bashir and Dalia were very little then, Dalia was even a baby while her family was escaping from death, however their past was imprinted on their minds through the stories told by their families. Most of their actions are shaped by the shadows of their past.

Almost similar to the book, in the film, Salma has a happy past in her house with her lemon grove. She was very happy with her father who bequeathed this grove to her. She always lives with the image of her happy past. She has lost all the things she had once, her father, her husband and her children. Although her children are alive, they have left her alone in her sadness. The lemon trees are the last witnesses of her lamented past, so she tries everything she can do to save it in order to preserve her good memories. Salma accuses the Israeli Minister and the other Israelis for her miseries; however, her idealized past is not ruined by the 'enemy' as she thinks. She just does not admit that her loneliness is caused by her own family and children.

The people experiencing exile are strongly connected to their past memories of their homeland as the image itself is a tool for keeping the dreams of going back alive. Hamid Naficy concedes that, "Exile is inexorably tied to homeland and the possibility of return. However, the frustrating elusiveness of return makes it magically potent" (Introduction 3). In this sense, people in exile try to keep some symbols for themselves as a connection to their illusions of the homeland. The most prominent symbol coming together with their history that never ceases to follow them in the Palestinian and Israeli's situations is the lemon tree, as it can be understood from the title of the book *The Lemon Tree* and the film *Lemon Tree*.

In both sources, the lemon trees keep an important place, because they are reminders of the idealized homelands. Joanna C. Long comments on the relation between trees and diaspora: "trees are central to bridging the perceived physical and emotional distance between diaspora and the homeland" (65). Trees are significant images reminding them of home. Referring to the Jewish diaspora specifically, she illustrates how "the physical characteristics of trees evoke imagery of family, relatedness and global/national Jewish community. The Book of Isaiah, for example, sets up the tree as a symbol of the Jewish people: "for as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people" (Long 71-72).

There are different reasons for planting a tree, for instance, according to a tree planting project for the Jews on the land of Palestine, Jews try to dispose of their past memories of living in exile and they try to start a new life by creating new things of their own on their land like planting new trees. Long

argues that being in exile as miserable and powerless people can be associated with the weakness caused by staying away from nature. Just the same, building strong connections with nature is a reference to the power of a nation. According to Long's opinion, Jews' planting new trees is a symbol of getting rid of the "diaspora's dust" and start a new energetic life on their homeland like the newly growing trees. Long comments that this process of planting trees is "simultaneously the transformation of the diasporic Jewish Other into a new Zionist national Self" (70). Israelis build the houses and plant trees in order to establish a nation on Israel, because house, tree and family all represent a nation. The family ties are important for construction of a strong relationship within the house. Likewise, the connection of people with the land and with each other is important for the state. Strong relationships for families and states require some roots that connect the members to the state. Trees are the representation of a nation's roots on the land that they own, as they are an indicator of possession.

This idea of Israelis' planting trees is important to put signs of being the owners of the land and to create new memories of life. Trees are like landmarks, they sometimes tell stories about their owners. In Tolan's book, *The Lemon Tree*, the tree in the garden of the house that Bashir's family owned but now Dalia lives in, is at the center of the conflict between the two families like a witness to their happiness and sadness. The lemon tree is a tie connecting them to each other. Ahmad has a strong connection with this tree as he planted it in the garden of his family house, because "The tree as a symbol evolved as a central feature in the Palestinian collective memory of

an idealized past” (Hammer 65). His past was based on the saying that every man should build a house, plant a tree and father a son. This idea is important in the construction of a nation, because it is also a necessity for a nation to have strong ties among its members and to put territorial traces. House, tree, and son are signs for the success of the father and family, which is the same for the country that it is required to have roots on the land to have a complete power on it. Therefore, trees keep a substantial place for the strength of the family and the nation. The absence of this significant sign means the separation from the homeland and brings the trauma to the members of each group. That’s why the characters feel a deep sorrow of losing their old days that they had in their homes. Ahmad built the house for living together happily for a long time, but those happy memories were left in the past. He has a life in exile and misses those days by hoping to reach these moments one day as described in Ali Al-Khalili’s lines:

Departure, eternal departure
when will exiles sit
around one table
and a family rejoice
knowing
that despite sorrow
it is our homeland (qtd. in Hammer 50)

The dinner scene in which the family members gather together keeps an important place as a picture of happiness. The lemon tree reminds Ahmad the happy old days, that’s why he even keeps one lemon that Dalia gives him

in his visit to the house: “whenever [Ahmad] felt troubled at night and could not sleep, he would pace up and down [his] rented apartment in Ramallah, holding a shriveled lemon in his hand” (Tolan 201). It is a physical connection with the homeland that he longs to go back to.

For Mishra, “homeland may be presented as the desirable norm” (8) and in the book, this “desirable place” is symbolized by an old lemon for Bashir and his family. When Dalia visits Bashir and his family in their home to where they had been exiled, Bashir could tell her many things about their sufferings as an exiled family, but he chooses to show the lemon that Dalia gave them four months ago during his visit to her houses in Ramla. Keeping this lemon explains how it reminds Bashir’s father of the tree of his house as it is still standing in the garden:

“To us this lemon is more than fruit, Dalia,” Bashir said slowly. “It is land and history. It is the window that we open to look at our history. A few days after we brought the lemons home, it was night, and I heard a movement in the house. I was asleep. I got up, and I was listening... Do you know what I saw? My father who is nearly blind... Dalia, I saw him holding the lemon with both hands. And he was pacing back and forth in the room, and the tears were running down his cheeks”. (Tolan 243)

A lemon may evoke the desires inside exiled people as homeland lives in their souls. The homeland is a place flowing in their blood living with them until death and they carry it wherever they go in the world notwithstanding the distance (Yusuf Abu Lauz, qtd. in Schulz and Hammer

184). The land is a living thing and it has a strong relation for the people living on it: "The land is never neutral. Whatever it is deviled by aggressors or yearned for by the native, it has a meaning and an impact on the lives of others" (Al-Musawi 35). The exiled people imagine that their land, trees or any other property mourn for the owners' sadness as depicted in Abu Salma's poem:

Has the lemon tree been nurtured by our tears?

No more do birds flutter among the high pines,

or stars gaze vigilantly over Mt. Carmel.

The little orchards weep for us, gardens grow desolate,

the vines are forever saddened. (qtd. in Hammer 65)

The lemon tree is one of the connections for exiles both holding the happiness of the past and accompanying the owners in their present trauma. According to Long, trees are witnesses to the lives of people on the land that they share; they keep memories and remind the people of their properties on this land. Trees are like guards for the land, helping the owners to feel safe. Moreover, they are the signs of the owners showing that this place is their territory (Long 73). In the situation of exile, sometimes very tiny things may have powerful meanings as this old lemon carries the memories of the whole family, Naficy observes: "Sometimes a small, insignificant object taken into exile (such as a key to the house) becomes a powerful synecdoche for the lost house and unreachable home, feeding the memories of the past and the narratives of exile"(6). As a "powerful synecdoche", the little lemon reminds Ahmad of the lemon tree providing shadow, refreshment for them in their

happy days in their house and it represents the attachment to the same ground. Ahmad and his family share almost the same happy family memories with the lemon tree in their garden. As the whole family has an exile life for years, they think about every little thing belonging to their home as a reminder of their past and memories, Victoria Mason asserts:

In the re-creation of Palestine through such “acts of memory”, Palestine was made tangible to an almost sensory level where children born in the diaspora could describe their family’s house down to the texture of the bricks, the position of an olive tree in the yard or the scent from a decades-old lemon tree. (273)

Similar to the book, Eran Riklis’ film *Lemon Tree* also includes the symbol of a lemon tree grove separating the house of Salma from the house of a powerful Israeli minister. In the film, the lemon grove symbolizes Salma’s roots, her past memories on this land with her father like the past of Bashir and his family. She feels so attached to the ground with the roots of the lemon trees because of her lamented past. That’s why she resists as long as she can do in order not to lose her lemon trees. She even goes to the Supreme Court to seek her right on her land. She is a courageous woman to defend her rights even though there is a powerful man, the Defense Minister Navon, against her and there is a high possibility that the judge would be on the politician’s side. Attachment to a place does not simply mean the connection between nation and region, but it also refers to more elaborate meanings as noted:

All the nuances of reassurance, fitness, belonging, association, and community, entailed in the phrase at home or in place [...]

It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases belonging to or in a place, being at home in a place. (qtd. in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 42)

The symbol of a lemon tree is emphasized by a song in the film. At the beginning of the film, there is a song whose lyrics summarize the whole situation between the two nations:

Lemon tree very pretty
And the lemon flower is sweet
But the fruit of the poor lemon
Is impossible to eat. (*Lemon Tree*)

The lyrics of this stanza actually refer to the current dilemma that the Palestinians and Israelis have to carry simultaneously. These two nations have been trying to live together for more than half of a century because they have no other choice. Palestinians have sweet memories of the past and the hope of return to home, which keeps them alive and never gives up following them. However, when their wishes meet at the expense of the Other, the sour part of the story begins. If Bashir and his family become successful to move Dalia and her family, this will be a sour victory by causing the other family's misery.

This sour victory is the same for the Israelis. They settle in Palestinian homes as they justify themselves for this right by thinking about their escape from death, how they have been persecuted for centuries. They start to have

sweet memories on a new land by trying to erase their past, but they all know that this is also a sour victory over Palestinians. All the issue is about justification of both nations with their past memories for their actions. That's why the Israeli woman owning Bashir's friend's house does not permit them to enter, she feels guilty and she justifies herself with her past as she does not want to suffer again. Most of the people use their memories for justification of their actions even for the violence and the hatred that is how exile or diaspora works. Their memory is based on the idealization of a nonexistent homeland, because it does not fail them as it does not exist.

Bashir and Ahmad, Dalia and her family, Salma and the rest of the people all idealize a best homeland for them; as it is only a dream there is no limit for them and they choose the best ones because there is nothing to compare it with. They all imagine how happy they would be, how perfect life they would have on their homeland, but in reality, maybe they would not be so happy. Due to the fact that this imagined perfect life is taken away from them, they are liable to do anything to get it back. From either part of the story, the Palestinians or Israelis are right because of all these memories when they are listened separately, which is the sweet lemon on the surface, but the way how people achieve it together with the land or the house is sour.

The lemon tree is not the only symbolic element connecting people to the land. Belonging to a place is one of the basic necessities of human beings and house is a shelter that enables people to meet this necessity. People feel safe in their own shelter. Most people accept their homes as a part of their identity and they do not want to be separated from it. Family ties

can be another reason for feeling attached to a place. This attachment is very well described by Said in “The Mind of Winter” as quoted: “Linked to the issue of identity is of course the question of belonging. As Simone Weil notes, feeling “rooted” somewhere like you “belong” is one of the most important needs of the human being” (qtd. in Mason 274). Mason comments on Said’s argument:

The importance of belonging of feeling “part of something”, that you are secure and there is a sense of possibility for the future is intimately tied to ideas of “home”. Dorinne Kondo argues that in an emotional sense, home is a “safe place” where subtle nuances are understood and “where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders”. (274)

House is a safe place carrying the comfort of belonging and being separated from this support causes the people on exile to experience numerous notions as the concept itself holds several connotations. House, home and homeland all have different meanings

moving from the literal to the abstract. *House* is the literal object, the material place in which one lives, and it involves legal categories of rights, property, and possession and their opposites. *Home* is anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination [...]. *Homeland* has been the most absolute, abstract, mythical, and fought for of the three notions. (Naficy, Introduction 6)

Naficy concedes that all these three terms are “in crisis” due to the chaos of different types of exiles. Nevertheless, as far as Palestinian and Israelis experience in the analysed sources, family house, as a literal object, keeps an important place for the people in exile as their pasts and hopes have been left in their homeland. In the book, *The Lemon Tree*, this attachment is given with one of the major symbols, a house that both families share: “This home involved two families, two peoples, two histories” (Tolan 287). Bashir and Dalia live in the same house and have similar memories, but in different times. After Bashir and his family’s exile, Dalia and her family become the new owners. Dalia’s childhood passes in the same house. Both families feel safe in this house and they accept themselves belonging to this house. Their house is a kind of attachment for them to this land:

The house itself becomes a metaphor for the conflict. Two families, one Palestinian, one Israeli, both claim the same house, but it remains in the possession of the Israeli one. Dalia and Bashir, the central characters, even had the same bedroom. At the book’s conclusion, when the house serves a community purpose as the Open House, the competing Khairi and Eshkenazi personal claims to the house have not been reconciled. (Pressman 435)

This house is a problem from the beginning to the end inasmuch as it holds both separation and union interdependently for both families. The loss of this house does not only mean a kind of physical loss, but all notions of attachment related to it are completely lost, as Said identifies, “Exile is

predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both" ("Reflections on exile" 185). In this respect, the suffering of exiled people is enormous due to both material and spiritual loss. Exile conceives more than an inaccessible place in here, moreover, it turns into not only being away from the motherland but also being homeless, "Exile locates the home in a homeland that is distant and for the time being unapproachable. Home becomes an impossible object, always receding with the horizon. In claiming a permanent residence on earth, to be away from the homeland is always to be homeless" (Peters 31). This attachment and at the same time displacement to a place is enounced by Bhabha, he depicts the meaning of this restlessness: "In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (*The Location of Culture* 13). The necessity of feeling of secure in coping with life forces exiled people to create their homes in their imaginations as they are away from the original houses (Schulz and Hammer 187). Nevertheless, the images in their minds do not heal their sufferings, but harm more.

Due to the misery of being away from the idealized home, the world turns into a kind of chaos in which the places and things are not invisible enough. No other place than the idealized homeland is acceptable for exiled people as asserted by Mahmud al-Hut:

Lost Paradise! You were never too small for us,

But now vast countries are indeed too small.

Torn asunder your people,

Wandering under every star. (qtd. in Schulz and Hammer 85)

The exiled people are not only made 'unhomed', but they also feel 'homeless'. Bhabha differentiates being 'unhomed' or 'homeless': "To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (*The Location of Culture* 13). Being 'unhomed' is to be moved from your motherhouse and to lose it because of an outside power far from your reach. Even though you are 'unhomed', it does not mean that you are living on the streets. You have a home, but not the one in your memories. On the other hand, being 'homeless' is having no home neither the idealized one nor any kind to live in. In the case of Palestinians and Israelis, they have a kind of home, they are not complete 'homeless' whether they wish to live in it or not. Nevertheless, they also imagine being homeless as they dramatize the situation of being in exile. Bashir and his family feel a kind of displacement between 'unhomed' and 'homeless' by carrying their homes in their minds like the other Palestinians: "Usually a man lives in a certain place in the world, but for the Palestinian the place lives in the man" (Shalhat, qtd. in Schulz and Hammer 97). The homeland does not just mean the physical object like the house or the trees, it is a mental issue, therefore, exiled people can feel themselves at home through their imaginations when they are not indeed (Mahmoud, qtd. in Schulz and Hammer 186). These living

images make the situation more difficult for exiled people to adjust to a new home.

Besides all these sorrows of being separated from their roots, there is another symbol in the Palestinian and Israeli issue to make the Other more obvious, which has a different aim and meaning by causing them more pain. The aim of building a wall is very simple; people want to protect themselves from outside dangers. They also want to have a special life of their own. They build walls to feel secure and to be separate inside their personal areas. In the film *Lemon Tree*, there is a kind of wall between the two sides, which consists of lemon trees, but the Minister does not trust in this garden. He makes his own wall outside his home and tries to pull down the lemon trees to protect himself from any kind of dangers. His behaviour may be caused by his political position, however, regarding a lemon grove as an enemy can be interpreted his distancing himself from the Other. The opening sentence of the film explains the meaning of separation very clearly: "Lemon tree is set on both sides of the green line border between Israel and the West Bank" (*Lemon Tree*). It is between the two sides like a wall that can mean different things.

Normally walls are built to make people feel safe both physically and symbolically but they also mean separation of coexistence and dialogue between both sides. Said touches on this double meaning of the wall, which is a barrier to keep people secure within the borders of a territory, can enroll for the restrictions of people's ideas and actions. Said names these walls as "prisons" which means keeping by force further than safety. He includes his

view about the exile that they cannot be kept under chains and they cross over all these barriers to reach their freedom (“Reflections on Exile” 185).

Similar to the film, there are also references to the separation wall in the book, too. Israelis build a long wall at the border of the West Bank, from Dalia’s exclamation:

A towering curtain of concrete, stretching out of sight to the north. This was Israel’s “security barrier” separating the West Bank from Israel and, in some cases, the West Bank from itself [...]. “The sole purpose of the fence” Israel declared, “is to provide security” in response to “the horrific wave of terrorism emanating from the West Bank”. (Tolan 380-81)

Nidal Raza, the Palestinian journalist who accompanies Dalia comments on Dalia’s description of the wall: “‘They are building the wall,’ said Nidal, ‘so they don’t have a look into our eyes’” (381). She makes such a proclamation, because from Palestinian side, the wall’s meaning is not “security” but “apartheid wall” (381).

The existence of a real or imagined wall between Palestinians and Israelis in both works is obvious, which means not only the psychological separation but also a kind of barrier preventing the two nations’ dialogues. In the film, the lack of communication between the main characters Salma and Mira is a big problem. As well as the fence between Salma and Mira, there are some other restrictions on their free behaviors that separate them such as language. They could not talk face-to-face, so they could not express their opinions clearly to solve the conflict. They cannot reach each other

independently; at one point Mira comes to knock Salma's door, but at the last minute a security guard comes and stops her. Maybe, she wants to talk to her and to share her secret feelings with her, but there is the impossibility of having good relations because of the problems on the whole land. If people could not talk freely, like Salma and Mira, they have to listen what others say or they believe what they want.

Salma and Mira do not speak directly throughout the film; however, they look at each other from their windows, another symbol of psychological exile. At first, living together does not seem so difficult, even the main antagonists fancy each other, as their lives are so similar. Salma is on one side of the wall and Mira, the Defense Minister's wife, is on the other. Both women are lonely, because they do not have many friends and relatives around them. Salma only has an old companion, a family friend, and her children stay away from her, as they are busy with their own lives. Mira has a daughter, but she is away, too. Salma and Mira are mirrors to each other, because they have similar worlds with their loneliness and solitude. Mira shows sympathy towards Salma, but there are limitations. Mira says: "I wish, I could be a better neighbor to her...but I suppose it is a bit too much hope for. There is too much blood, too much politics, and there is a lemon grove between us" (*Lemon Tree*). They cannot come together due to the obstacles in their lives hindering the dialogue between them, but still they are accepted as hope promising characters like Bashir and Dalia. Salma, Mira, Bashir and Dalia are different from the rest of the society, because they do not just obey the restrictions taught them, but they question and they search some ways

for the continuation of the dialogue between the two nations. Even though Bashir and Dalia succeed this to some extent, Salma and Mira choose to obey what their destiny will show them by changing their lives, as they believe, which also gives hope for their future.

CHAPTER 3

SEEKING WAYS OUT OF THE TRAUMA

Hope is an indispensable part of exiled people's lives. They have an endless hope for returning. Patricia Seed narrates a story of a key to a house that a Palestinian man has preserved, which has been inherited by his ancestors who left their homelands in Spain five hundred years ago. Seed later comments on the story that "Palestinians cannot be expected to hand over the keys to houses they abandoned only two generations ago when they still retain the keys to a homeland from which they were exiled at an even more distant time" (86). Here, the issue is not only "the key" or "Palestinians", there are many other hope holding symbols and Israeli examples showing their insistence on returning their holy land for hundreds of years.

The main issue is that the dispossession from the motherland keeps the hope of return alive for both nations. Even for some, motherland is so real that it is as if their own mother caring and waiting for their return to home for dinner as symbolized in Darwish's poem:

What have you cooked for us,
Mother, for we will return?
They have looted the oil jars,
Mother, and the flour sacks.
So bring us grain from the fields!
Bring in greens,

We are hungry. (qtd in Schulz and Hammer 101)

Therefore, motherland is full of comfort, peace and caring as understood from the metaphor of mother for the home. Although exiles have disastrous experiences, they struggle to preserve their hopes for a better future. As analysed in the previous sections, Palestinians and Israelis have the similar trauma of exile but in different ways. In the book and the film, most of the characters do not just mourn the trauma of exile; on the contrary, some of them try to find a solution to end the miseries of both sides. Seeking ways out of this chaotic world is not a simple act, but some references and symbols are included in both sources for this.

As stated before, Dalia and Bashir are promising characters through their peaceful co-habitation towards each other. Together with other Israeli people, Dalia cannot move to any other location after that point, because all Israelis accept this land as their homes. The only solution is to accept this situation and try to live together, as stated by Dalia: "I have nowhere else to go, Bashir, I am staying here. The best thing is for you to live and leave us to live, too. We have to leave together. To accept each other" (Tolan 247). At first, it was impossible for Bashir to accept this idea as he wants to return his home, but he tries to be reasonable towards Dalia due to their friendship despite being on the opposite sides. The contradiction makes the situation more difficult, "They were enemies, and they were friends" (248). This dilemma becomes their fate due to the conflict over the land. They later reveal the reason at the end of the book, "And yet we are so deeply connected. And what connects us? The same thing that separates us. This

land [...]. Our enemy is the only partner we have” (Tolan 390). The issue about the land both brings them together and forces them to stay apart, which is the obvious proof of sour-sweet lives of Palestinians and Israelis. Nevertheless, Dalia and Bashir continue their friendship, instead of hostility, by being hopeful for their future.

Both families share almost similar experiences of displacement about the same house. They conclude from all these uniqueness about this house that it should not be only one side’s property, but they decide to use it for a common purpose for both nations. Bashir comes up with an idea for both families to make it a kindergarten and Dalia agrees with him, too:

For Bashir, the solution had to be consistent with his rights and his lifelong struggle as a Palestinian. “This house is my homeland,” he told Dalia. “I lost my childhood there. I would like the house to provide a very nice time for the Arab children of al-Ramla. I want them to have joy there. I want them to have the childhood that never had. What I lost there, I want to give them”. (287)

The end of the work refers to a hopeful future with a happy multicultural society in which there is no reference to any traumatic exile but to a happy life. The message is very clear in the book through the solution for the house that is a problem between the old and the new owners. Both main characters of the story, Bashir and Dalia, put a positive ending to their miseries about the same house. Neither of them could have the house with a complete

comfort and right regardless of the Other, so their solution is the best one, promising for the future of this house:

After her parents die, Dalia consults others including Bashir and settles on two uses for the house, renamed the Open House: a place for the Arab children of Ramla and a place to work on Arab-Jewish co-existence. Throughout the book, the house sits at the center as Bashir, Dalia, and others try to come to grips with the competing family histories tied to the same house. (Pressman 431)

Actually, Dalia's consulting and searching for the best way to please both families derive from her being uncomfortable with owning this house alone. She shows an example of the ethical behavior in such a condition: "it is a part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (qtd. in Said, "Between Worlds" 565). Even though Dalia accepts this house as her own, she is sure that it is also somebody else's home too and this discomfort drives her to this solution. Open House, as understood from its name, is a perfect image of possible Arab-Jewish co-existence. After that, Arab and Jewish children can live in the same house and play around the same lemon tree:

In October 1991, the first four Arab kindergarten children walked through the doors Ahmad Khairi had framed and secured fifty-five years earlier. This was the beginning of Bashir's dream: to bring joy to the Arab children of al-Ramla. Soon the mission would expand, incorporating the vision of Dalia, Yehezkel, and Michail: to be a place of encounter

between Arab and Jew. They would call it Open House. (Tolan 333)

As connected to the solution given with this house and the message of the book *The Lemon Tree*, there is a symbolic hope for a better future; even one of the last chapters is titled 'hope'. In the book, Arab and Jewish children gather and plant a new lemon tree together with Dalia: "Dalia's hands, and the hands of the Arabs and Jews lowered the sapling into a hole beside the old stump. They all went to the kitchen and brought a pail of water, and everyone gently tamped down the soil" (392). Although Dalia expresses her sadness for Khairi family's not being present there, as it is also their right to witness this incidence, the ending of the novel is a positive one. This new lemon tree is given as a reference to the hope for a new life and a more peaceful environment on this multicultural land. It is stated that solutions for a better life are at the hands of children and new comings:

This dedication is without obliterating the memories. Something is growing out of the old history. Out of the pain, something new is growing [...] it's the next generation now that's going to create a reality. That we are entrusting something in their hands. We are entrusting both the old and the new. (392)

This act is mentioned to be done by getting rid of all the memories of the past and without thinking the painful history. Otherwise, it is not very possible to root some new things on this land like the trees and to nourish the clear minds of children. There is no meaning for doing the same thing Bashir and Dalia's families did them by imbuing the children with negative memories. It

would only damage the children's friendship and would cause harbouring ill wills against each other. Open House promises for the future of the Arab and Jewish children with the lemon tree in its garden. Through this Open House, Dalia and Bashir utter their wish to leave a better land to their children:

At Open House, now in its fifth year in the house in Ramla, Dalia and Yehezkel had seen more willingness among Israelis to engage in Arab-Jewish dialogue. The summer peace camps with Arab and Jewish children were suddenly popular, and Yehezkel believed "the whole coexistence approach", which he and Dalia had advocated for years, "was legitimized in the Eyes of Jews." Dalia, for her part, would remember how she had concluded her letter to Bashir seven years earlier: "I pray that with your cooperation and God's help, our children will delight in the beauty and bounties of this holy land". (Tolan 344)

Dalia and Bashir's cooperation is a difficult one because setting limits between nations are very easy in multicultural societies. They just name their sides as 'we' and the other side as 'they' (or I and the Other) to divide a society into two. This discrimination is the starting point of all conflicts. With these two words 'we' and 'they', the two nations build an imagined wall between them. These two sides want to get rid of the traces of the Other's existence or dominance. Multicultural populations mostly prefer to declare self-freedom instead of joining each other as a complete society:

People will continue to turn against their neighbors and minorities as political lids come off. "Freedom" in such suddenly

decompressed societies will continue to release the worst instincts (“better off without them”) as well as the best (“now we are free to join the world”). But development is as uneven as it ever was. (Ascherson 106)

This imagined boundary of othering prevents Bashir and Dalia’s wishes on leaving this holy land in peace to their children. Even though it is challenging to tear down this massive wall of prejudices, Dalia and Bashir take the first step as they consider it is time to say ‘enough’ to these boundaries. Said encourages this idea: “It is enough for ‘us’ to set up these boundaries in our minds; ‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from ‘ours’” (*Orientalism* 54). Said touches this problem of the land on which people set up some boundaries with the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’. Nevertheless, Said exclaims that this is enough sorrow and it is time to tear down the walls of mental discrimination. Bhabha supports Said’s argument by celebrating multiculturalism, as the appreciation of more than one culture on one piece of land, which is an inescapable outcome in exile societies. This idea of multicultural society does not consider the differences a lot, but it accepts them as having equal individual rights composing a unique one: “[w]e should learn to think of our society as consisting not of a majority and minorities, but of a plurality of cultural groups” (qtd. in Kukathas 695).

In *The Lemon Tree*, Dalia also mentions Said’s idea of eliminating the barriers while she is discussing with Bashir for the future of the land: “If you say everything is all Palestine and I say everything is the whole land of Israel,

I don't think we'll get anywhere" (Tolan 387). Dalia tells the truth that there is no meaning of discussing whose land it is, it is too late for this, she adds:

We share a common destiny here. I truly believe that we are so deeply and closely related – culturally, historically, religiously, psychologically. And it's so clear to me that you and your people are holding the key to our true freedom. And I think we could also say, Bashir, that we hold the key to our freedom. It's a deep interdependence. (387)

The key for freedom is at the hands of both Palestinians and Israelis as Dalia states. The only necessary thing is to realize Said's idea by saying "enough to set boundaries in our minds" and accept each other as neighbors or as a part of their state. In the book, to materialize this ideal, there is a message of hope to leave exile even though political and social problems worsen by the end of the book. Violence and intolerance against each other increase day by day on both Palestinian and Israeli sides. The lemon tree dies, but hope never ends in the garden of the Open House and continues living with the new lemon tree planted by the children.

In the film *Lemon Tree*, there are such boundaries corresponding Said's description, but there is no clear solution like 'Open House' in the book. However, there are still references that there are some people who seek for peace besides the ones who create troubles. The Main characters, Salma and Mira, are two example characters who give the messages of thoughtfulness and changing oneself in order to become good neighbors. They could not pass further to look from their houses' windows to each other

but they, at least, leave hope for the future of understanding each other. If there is no conflict on the ownership of the land, if there is no reference to exile and sufferings, and if both people succeed to live in peace together; then the windows will disappear between them, and both Israelis and Palestinians will look at the same blue sky as one unique state:

I do think, however, that the settlements have to be dismantled and the populations have to face each other as not only neighbors but in fact in coexistence, in one basically homogenous state, which we call historical Palestine, whether you call it Israel or a Palestinian state. The economies and the histories are so intertwined that I still think that in the end a binational state is the only long-term solution. (Said, *Culture and Resistance* 63)

Said's idea of coexistence is an important issue covered through the symbols in the film, in which Riklis tries to give the message to the audience that Palestinians and Israelis' intertwined lives are full of hope that is made bitter with inevitable predicaments. The original story of the film comes from a real fact based on almost similar experiences with the problem of olive trees instead of lemons. Riklis changes some of the main things from the original story in order to make it seem more real and put more specific symbols describing these people's lives. He adds an unrequited love story between Salma and her lawyer, Ziad Daud. This love decorates the story and gives the meaning that these people are alive and they have natural emotions of human beings like sadness, happiness, love and hope. Riklis

states that he was affected by the news telling some people's stories on the west bank and added some fiction to his knowledge like this love story. Moreover, in the real story the olive trees were all cut down in the end; however, in the film, the lemon trees survive. It symbolizes the reality that people on this land will continue living with lemon trees between them. The lemon trees are cut down into very low level, but they still continue living. It is the idealization of the literary work by the director Riklis, because there is a hope message given with the surviving lemon tree roots, which means there will be a new grove in the future.

The survival of the lemon trees in the film may mean two opposite things because of the double-sided meaning of lemons. For Salma, it is hope, because she still has her garden and there is a continuation of living things. Also the wall between Salma and Mira is not an enough obstacle anymore to see and talk to each other. If they choose to live together, the land becomes more convenient to be neighbors. In fact, the existence of the lemon grove as a wall between them is just one reason of their separation, as long as they can not get rid of other national restrictions, it is not possible to have a unique life. That's why Mira leaves the land without talking to Salma in person. This is the other meaning of the survival of the lemon trees. The lemons are sour, the trees are low, but they still exist in a way. No matter how these two women understand and sympathize with each other, there exists a sour social and political issue that they are not capable of solving on their own. Like the nature of lemon, optimism and unsolved conflicts come together as a sour-sweet ending.

No matter how big the conflicts are, there exists optimism. The film tries to show that if they gain the ability to look from the window of the people on the other side of the prejudice wall, they become more sensitive toward their lives and problems, like Mira and Salma. Instead of looking and talking only from their own worlds, the message is given to the people for eliminating the existence of the imagined wall between them and it is advised to live and think together. Only then, the ultimate peace becomes possible. Riklis tries to explain that it is the law of nature to build and tear down walls physically, but people should have the talent to tear down the walls of prejudices and disagreements between them in order to have a better and peaceful future on the same land.

CONCLUSION

Exile is fate, not a matter of choice. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians chose it willingly: “Israel did not choose to have Palestinians, and the Palestinians did not choose to have Israelis. It’s a given, and that’s the most critical point, how one deals with the given” (Tolan 266). The critical point is, as mentioned, the way in which people handle the destiny and how they solve the problems in the best way. Exile is not an easy and unique situation for everybody living away from the homeland: there are specific features and various ways to analyze them; therefore,

exile must not be thought of as a generalized condition of alienation and difference, or as one of the items on the diversity-chic menu. All displaced people do not experience exile equally or uniformly. Exile discourse thrives on detail, specificity, and locality. There is a there *there* in exile. (Naficy, Introduction 4)

This thesis tried to indicate some of these issues from different perspectives through the analysis of the two different sources, the book *The Lemon Tree* and the film *Lemon Tree*.

The Lemon Tree is a novel about the experiences of one Palestinian and one Israeli family who symbolize their nations’ struggles with exile in a land where both sides are the Other to each other. They are symbols of hope due to their positive approaches toward each other even though they still carry many stereotypical beliefs. At first sight, the two characters show us their own nations’ features. However, they show different attitudes toward

many situations – not just the stereotyped views of their own people. For example, Dalia is a sensitive woman who often seems to be on the Palestinians' side: "Since Dalia was not a security hawk but Bashir was focused on the right of return, he looked to be more in line with Palestinian thinking than she did with Israeli thinking" (Pressman 439). Dalia is evidently different from many other Israelis whom Bashir has met. She is different and hope-promising for the future from Bashir's own words: "It seemed she was someone different. I would say; 'She is open-minded, she's different compared with other Israelis that I met.' I hope, she is not a lonely candle in a darkened room" (Tolan 282). Bashir resembles Dalia to a candle lightening her environment and he wishes that there are more people like her for the goodness of their country.

The film *Lemon Tree* also includes specific examples of Palestinians and Israelis' experiences by referring to their psychological displacements caused by the political and social existence of the Other. Similar to the characters in the book, the two characters in the film, Salma and Mira, are symbols of hope for the future. As mentioned above, it is based on a true story, and Riklis tries to explain it by changing the kind of trees. His film is a specific story of certain people, but it can also be a story of any people who live on this land with such feelings and experiences. There is a mixture of symbolism and the reality of the people on this land.

Both in the book and the film, the characters' memories are important in shaping their lives because they all support the idea that "memories help us make sense of the world we live in" (Hammer 40). Their memories are

their unique hopes that give their life meaning. They have an idealized past in which they think they were happy, and they cannot get used to their present conditions because of these memories. There are two types of exile experiences: individuals like Ahmad and Salma who have direct experience of homeland; and those who have stories about it like Bashir and Dalia. Hammer identifies the first type of exiles who are different from the second type in the way that they imagine the land with a cultural perspective rather than a national perspective. Hammer argues that for the second type of people who were born into exile without any experience of the land, the country is an imagined, idealized national picture created by the stories and memories of other people (67-68). No matter if they live in the homeland personally or not, all exiles have the same image of a perfect place. They all want to go back to the homeland created in their minds, but the impossibility of return makes it even more desirable. All these imaginations are big obstacles between Palestinians and Israelis, because they blame the Other for their lost happiness in the motherland. Said resembles the condition of exile to the coldest season, surrounded by miseries. He states that it is “a mind of winter” when people keep remembering the beautiful memories of summer and autumn. The spring seems near; however, it is also unobtainable in the present condition (Said, “Reflections on Exile” 186). The harsh conditions of winter hinder imagining the coming spring, so people imagine the last summer or the previous ones thinking how perfect the past was. It is the same for exiled people: they cannot imagine a new future due

to all the sadness in their present life, and they have only an imaginary and idealized past.

These perfect memories drive people to accuse the Other, which is an easy way of to assign guilt. As Bashir's father, Dalia's family, and other people created the never existing homeland in their minds, they reflect it to their children, and the new generation starts to feel sorrow and to blame the Other for losing this non-existent land. The real reason, however, is their restlessness: "beyond the frontier between 'us' and 'outsiders' is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons" (Said, "Reflections on Exile" 177).

Being in-between individuals entails neither possession nor dispossession of a place completely. From childhood, both Palestinians and Israelis are raised with the image of the Other, who wants their lands, who wants to move them, who are evil, etc., and they also have 'we' as a whole nation, who have been suffering, who are miserable and who are legitimate to take any action to defend themselves for their own good. Living between these dilemmas drives two nations apart and blocks the possibility of dialogue and being friends on the same land.

The distancing of the Other is observed in the lifestyle of exiled people through the experience of trauma which can be symbolized through a lemon tree, a house, a wall. They all derive from the history of exiles that they cannot escape from and that shape their present and future lives. Any object can be a reminder of homeland. In the book and the film, a lemon tree has a

special meaning for the families. It is the symbol for the attachment to the ground and to the homeland for Bashir, his father, Dalia and her family, and also for Salma. The lemon tree is precious because it belongs to the idealized land that all of them desire to go back to, and it carries all the perfect memories of their imagined happiness in this place. The lemon tree is also a symbol for the sour- sweet situation between Palestinians and Israelis. They have sweet images, but when they gain them by causing the misery of the Other, they become sour.

The house, in whose garden the lemon tree grows, is another symbol at the center of the original motherland for exiles. It is not only a shelter, but also a paradise. They cannot leave their home behind, as explained by an exile: "Home is within me. I carry everyone and everything I am with me wherever I go" (Hammad, qtd. in Schulz and Hammer 184). The more people are away from home, the more their suffering grows as it continues living in their minds. For exiles, having any kind of house is not acceptable; they only wish to have the old one – as in the case with Bashir and Dalia's house. And even though Salma lives in the same house, she still desires the house in the past, which is full of happiness and memories of her family. The main point is the desire for the old house holding all their experiences and feelings.

Even though the lemon tree and house mostly represent memories, the meaning of the walls both aim to keep them safe against the Other and to separate the two nations. These stone images reflect their intentions by building barricades against dialogues between the two nations. All these symbols are the signs that Palestinians and Israelis cannot get rid of their

memories of the past. Due to the fact that exiled people have to live away from their past and ties to their homeland, they are powerless. Even though they seek, they do not have armies or protection. They are alone and they feel an immediate necessity to recover from their broken lives (Said, "Reflections on Exile" 177). Exiles are away from the real images of homeland, so they try to heal their present lives by creating solutions for themselves.

The only thing Palestinians and Israelis want is to wake up from the nightmare of their homelands' confiscation and start a new day in their old paradise. All the sadness arises from the impossibility of this wish: "The shock, disruption, or loss accompanying exile, together with the distance from the home's mundane realities, can invite the project of restoring the 'original' – the original home, the original state of being. Idealization often goes with mourning" (Peters 19). The lamentation coming after the loss of the idealized image is endless; however, some people, like Dalia, Bashir, Salma and Mira, hold hopes for an end to this suffering by lifting the imaginary obstacle between them. They become courageous individuals and they do not just obey the teachings given them; instead they question. Bashir and Dalia's dialogues illustrate most of the questions they had earlier about the Other. Although Salma and Mira are not able to talk directly, their actions show that they have similar worries and wishes. There is a new lemon tree planted at the end of the book by Arab and Jewish children in the unique home for both nations. Moreover, there is a lemon grove that has the old roots but waiting for the new branches and leaves for the future.

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