

**IDENTITY QUEST AND RESISTANCE: A LIMINAL STUDY OF
PALESTINIAN DIASPORA IN THE WORKS OF HALA ALYAN**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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In

English Literature

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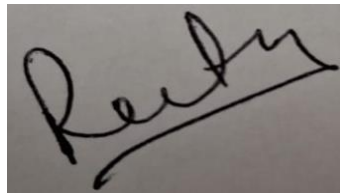
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2025

DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled **Identity Quest and Resistance: A Liminal Study of Palestinian Diaspora in the Works of Hala Alyan**” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Sanjay Prasad Pandey working as Professor in the Department of English of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

(Signature of Scholar)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “**Identity Quest and Resistance: A Liminal Study of Palestinian Diaspora in the Works of Hala Alyan**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English is a research work carried out by Reetu Limba, 42100307 is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

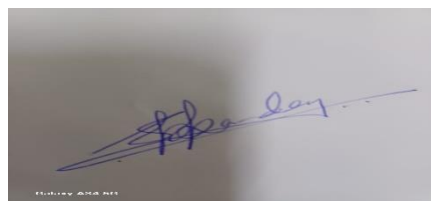
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Abstract

This thesis, entitled “Identity Quest and Resistance: A Liminal Study of Palestinian Diaspora in the Works of Hala Alyan,” applies the theoretical framework of Liminality, as developed by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Palestinian Diaspora depicted in the novels and poems of Palestinian-American author Hala Alyan. The thesis undertakes a multi-faceted exploration with the following objectives: to analyse the poetry and novels of Hala Alyan from the perspective of Diaspora Studies, to critically analyse the works of Hala Alyan from the perspective of the theory of Liminality, to evaluate and understand the idea of resistance in the works of Hala Alyan, to understand the concept of the quest for identity and rootlessness in the works of Hala Alyan.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how the novels and poems of Hala Alyan depict displacement and trauma faced by the Palestinian migrants, and how their identity is in a liminal state as they are not sure where they really belong. This thesis studies the identity crisis, rootlessness and quest for belonging of the Palestinian diaspora along with the challenges of adjustment in a foreign land with the theory of liminality. Hala Alya’s two novels — *Salt Houses* (2017), *The Arsonists’ City* (2021), along with four poetry collections — *Atrium* (2012), *Four Cities* (2015), *Hijra* (2016), and *The Twenty-Ninth Year* (2019) have been taken up for this research.

The thesis is divided into five interrelated chapters that collectively examine the dynamics of liminality, identity, and resistance of the Palestinian migrants in the works of Hala Alyan. Chapter One, “Palestinian Diaspora: Issues and Perspectives,” studies the historical and

theoretical foundations of diaspora, its origin and changing meaning over time, and the Palestinian Diaspora followed by its causes and repercussions. Chapter Two, “Liminality and the Novels of Hala Alyan,” provides a theoretical background for the theory of liminality and analyses the novels of Hala Alyan with the key terms of liminality. Chapter Three, “Tracing Liminality in the Poems of Hala Alyan,” extends the analysis of liminality in her poems to trace out the in-betweenness. Chapter Four, “The Quest for Identity and Rootlessness in the Works of Hala Alyan,” examines the author’s portrayal of unstable identities shaped by exile, migration, and intergenerational rupture. Finally, Chapter Five, “Hala Alyan and the Idea of Resistance, Assimilation and Cultural Hybridity,” explores the cultural implications of her writing, highlighting how her characters resist erasure while navigating assimilation and forging hybrid, liminal identities. Together, these chapters offer a comprehensive study of Alyan’s contribution in portraying contemporary Palestinian diasporic literature.

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Introduction

The Palestinian-American author Hala Alyan's literary works portray the experiences, emotions, and struggles of Palestinian migrants. Their quest for identity, pangs of diasporic trauma and spirit to adjust to new geographical and social setups are some of her recurrent themes. As, liminality is an in-between stage of performing the rituals in anthropology, in the same way, the Palestinian identity is also liminal. Because the Palestinian migrants' identity vacillates between their historic identity and their new identity in the new country, society and political setup. The hallmark of Alyan's characters is their resistance, no doubt they are uprooted, traumatized and discriminated against, yet they bloom wherever they have been planted and show resistance in form of remembrance. They don't lose hope and feel disheartened; on the contrary, they struggle for survival and flourish even in foreign lands and try to uphold their traditional values and religious faith. In the present research work the novels and poetry collections will be analysed with the theory of liminality to study the Palestinian diaspora, quest for identity and resistance in her novels and poetry. Hala Alyan delves deeply into themes of displacement, identity, trauma, and the complexities of belonging.

Hala Alyan was born on July 27, 1986 at Carbondale Illinois of United States during her parents' journey to America. Her father was of Palestinian origin and her mother was Lebanese. Her family got displaced from their homeland and lived in various countries including Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, the UAE, and Kuwait before eventually settling in the United States. When the Gulf War began, Alyan's family left Kuwait, and she was just four years old. Even after gaining asylum in the U.S., her family continued to relocate within the country. Alyan's early life was

marked by frequent moves across various countries in the Middle East, including Kuwait, Lebanon, and Qatar, before eventually settling in the United States. As Alyan herself comments about her experiences from various places in her memoir, “We moved constantly- from Kuwait to Texas to Oklahoma to Maine to the United Arab Emirates to Lebanon- and this allowed new stages, tabula rasa” (9). This nomadic upbringing profoundly shaped her sense of identity and later became a central theme in her creative work. Alyan has frequently described growing up between different cultures and countries, which has inspired her to explore the idea of belonging to many places while also feeling disconnected from them. She completed her BA from the American University of Beirut, an MA from Columbia University, and a PsyD from Rutgers University. Alyan is an adjunct assistant professor at New York University, a practicing clinical psychologist, and a Lannan Foundation Fellowship awardee. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband.

Hala Alyan is a licensed clinical psychologist with experience in forensic, inpatient, and school. She is specialised in the diagnosis and treatment of trauma, drug dependence, stress, mood and relationship disorders, and cross-cultural issues. She has led workshops that incorporate story therapy with prisoners, torture survivors, and refugees in the Middle East and the United States because she is interested in the connection between recovery and the arts. Her poetry collection *Hijra* won the 2016 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry, and another poetry collection *Atrium* won the 2013 Arab American Book Award. The Dayton Literary Peace Prize was given to her debut book, *Salt Houses*. She is a finalist for the Chautauqua Prize and the winner of the Arab American Book Award and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize which is given to works promoting peace in the world.

The works of Palestinian authors are embellished with the portrayal of recollections of Palestinian identity and collective consciousness. They also throw ample light on the trauma and hardships faced by the Palestinians, “They portray events such as the 1948 War (known as Naksa), the 1967 War (known as Nakba), the 1982 Lebanon War, and the 1990 Gulf War, not to mention the interminable wars on Gaza” (Salam, 2). Palestinian writers portray that Palestinians are evicted from their native countries or are compelled to live a life as refugees in new nations all over the world. The atmosphere of exile has perfectly been portrayed in these works and exemplifies how Palestinians are trapped in the pressure of memories and trauma. Their Tragic memories reveal that Palestinian people collectively recall their traumatic past even after getting uprooted from Palestine. Alyan herself speaks about nostalgia and her identity in an interview and says:

Through longings, mostly for certain foods and places and times that long predate me. I think I’ve learned to treat nostalgia almost like a hormone at this point: something non-negotiable and elemental. I learn to pray, breathe, dance, exist according to nostalgia’s ebbs and flows, and I’m grateful for this lineage and inheritance, even when it is complicated and painful—it belongs to me, it was gifted to me. (Alyan)

Hala Alyan has written five poetry collections entitled, *The Twenty-Ninth Year* (Mariner Books, 2019), *Hijra* (Southern Illinois University, 2016), *Four Cities* (Black Lawrence Press, 2015), *Atrium* (Three Rooms Press, 2012) *The Moon That Turns You Back* (2024), along with two novels - *Salt Houses* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017) and *The Arsonists' City* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021). She has also contributed in an anthology entitled; *We Call to the Eye & the Night: Love Poems by Writers of Arab Heritage* (2023). She has got published her debut

memoir entitled *I'll Tell You When I'm Home: A Memoir* in June 2025. Apart from these books she has written many poems and short stories for reputed magazines like *The Believer*, *The New Yorker*, *Guernica*, *Jewish Currents* and “The Academy of American Poets.” Alyan’s academic background in psychology also influences her literary works. With a doctorate in clinical psychology, she has worked extensively in the field of trauma, addiction, and mental health, with a particular focus on Middle Eastern populations and refugees. Her professional knowledge also adds some depth to her understanding of the psychological side of displacement, memory, and identity. In both her poetry and prose, Alyan explores how individual and collective trauma shapes human behavior and relationships, by highlighting the impact of external conflict on the emotional well-being of her characters. Her depiction of mental health issues, particularly within the context of war and displacement, provides a deep understanding of the refugee experience, blending her clinical knowledge with her literary craft. In an interview, Hala Alyan expresses the themes of her poems and her love for poetry-

One of the things I love about genre of poetry is how liberating it is—unlike memoir, for example, the poet can take liberties with imagining and reimagining history, with rewriting endings and playing (as you mentioned earlier) with temporal narratives. I think what pushes us to destroy isn’t dissimilar from what pushes us to love—a hunger for something different than what is, moving towards something that pulses hotter and louder than what we have right now. Trauma certainly can prime somebody to engage in self-destruction; we learn certain stories about ourselves from childhood and it can take a lifetime to unlearn them. That’s a lot of years in between where we can do a fair amount of damage.

(Alyan)

Alyan's debut novel, *Salt Houses* strengthened her literary reputation. The novel depicts the multigenerational story of a Palestinian family uprooted by war, following their dislocation from Palestine after the Six-Day War of 1967 to their lives across the Middle East and Europe. *Salt Houses* examines how war, displacement, and loss impact the family across generations. The novel is an example of a personal narrative carrying the universal theme of displacement. In *Salt Houses*, Salma opens the story by reading the coffee grounds in Alia's cup. She violates a long-standing rule by reading family members' coffee mugs. But Alia is adamant. Salma quickly regrets her choice because the prophecy doesn't match the expectations a mother has for her daughter. Salma can trace her life full of trauma and dislocations. The 1948 War forced the Yacoub's out of Jaffa, and they are once again subject to loss and dispersion. Mustafa is imprisoned, tortured, and dies during the 1967 War at Nablus. Salma relocates to Jordan. Alia, the younger daughter of Salma and Alia's husband Atef moved to Kuwait.

The focus of the story then shifts to Alia, Atef, and their children Riham, Karam, and Souad. With the start of the Gulf War, Alia's family moves to Jordan. Riham is married to a Jordanian doctor named Latif. After marrying Elie, Souad relocated to Paris and had two children, Manar and Zain. Souad relocates to the US with her kids following her divorce. Karam marries to different exiled Iraqi Kurdish woman named Budur. They have a daughter named Linah and they reside in the United States. The Yacoub's story is centered on homelessness and travel, which serves as a reminder of their vulnerability and unease. Alyan recalls this difficult past as a form of expression for artists to portray Palestinian suffering. Throughout, the novel Atef hides a secret from his wife Alia that it was he who did not let his brother Mustafa run from Nablus and later on he was killed in prison. He shares everything with his friend Mustafa even after he dies in the form of some secret letters. The letters are later read by his granddaughter

who visits the places mentioned in the letters to relocate her roots. Whereas Ali suffers from Alzheimer's and remains lost in memories of her youthful stay at Nablus and the pleasant memories of her deceased brother Mustafa. She highlights the pangs of Palestinian diaspora in her first novel, s Alyan herself says in an interview,

I'm interested in the idea of diaspora in the Middle East because I do think that's something that happens a lot and is not really talked about. We have a very Euro-centric idea of what it means and looks like to be a refugee: those people come from way over there, they come all the way over here, they dress certain ways and talk in with accents. (Alyan)

Her second novel, *The Arsonists' City*, expands on similar themes but takes a broader geopolitical and emotional sweep. The story revolves around a Lebanese-Syrian-American family and explores the intricacies of identity, family loyalty, and the legacy of the Lebanese Civil War. In this novel, Alyan's writing shifts between past and present, Lebanon and the United States, as she weaves together personal and political histories. In *The Arsonists' City*, the story of the Nasr family is portrayed as Idris, a heart surgeon in California, considering selling the Beirut house, which he and his sister Sara inherited from their late father, Issa Nasr. About forty years ago, Idris initially developed a fascination for Mazna, a talented Damascene actress who had previously made appearances in several Shakespearean plays. In the summer of 1978, Idris introduces Mazna to Zakaria, a longtime friend. His mother, Hayat, has spent her entire life working as a cleaner at the Nasr's house. Zakaria is a Palestinian refugee. The summer is spent by Idris, Zakaria, and Mazna casually taking pictures and filming their travels. Zakaria and Mazna fell in love with each other, and the two had a sexual encounter in the bakery where Zakaria works. After questioning by Idris, Zakaria leaves the house feeling humiliated and goes

back to the refugee camp where he resides with his mother and three younger sisters. Following a week, Zakaria is murdered by a militant group of Phalangists due to his alleged involvement in Phalangist militiaman's murder. Idris persuades Mazna to get married to him and flee to the US with him so that Mazna can continue her acting career and he can pursue his job as a surgeon in the United States. Mazna makes fruitless attempts to break down Hollywood's walls. When finally, she is about to get selected for a role, her husband denies it to the producer on the phone because she is pregnant for the third time, whereas, she has already aborted the child without talking about it to Idris. She finally settles down to be a stay-at-home mother, raising her three kids, Ava, Mimi (Marwan), and Naj.

Mimi and Naj become singers, and Ava starts working as a biologist when she grows up. Ava is happily married, and she has children too. Mimi is in a live-in relationship. Naj is a lesbian, and the fact is known only to her brother. In the late 2010s, when the family chooses to spend their holiday vacation in Beirut. While finding the whereabouts of Hayat whom she saw in several old family pictures, Ava learns she is Zakaria's daughter— a fact which Mazna and Idris have kept from her and one another for almost forty years. The book comes to an ending with Ava deciding to take a leave from her job in the USA so that she can spend additional time in Beirut.

Alyan's first poetry collection, *Atrium* established her as a powerful voice in contemporary poetry, blending personal narrative with political and historical contexts. This work won the Arab American Book Award in 2013. Alyan explores lines of global challenges in private locations in her first book of poetry, *Atrium*. Alyan has used very creative imagery, and fierce passion in her poems. She gives references to astrology, Greek mythology and love in her poetry. Her poems blend old mythology into modern folklore to give it a special effect. The

poetry work addresses a wide range of subjects. Hala Alyan explains in an interview that this book includes poems she wrote in college containing poems of various themes.

A part of poems concerning each zodiac sign is included in *Atrium's* opening. *Atrium* contains many references to astrology, Greek mythology and the zodiac signs. The lack of a clear storyline to guide the reader makes this part seem detached from the rest of the book. Alyan uses rich and expressive language in *Atrium* to examine the links of personal history, cultural memory, and the difficulty of navigating many worlds. The poems frequently address family, exile, love, and the desire for one's homeland, portraying the emotional complexity of cross-cultural existence.

Hala Alyan's second poetry collection entitled *Four Cities* explores the themes of identity, displacement, and the experience of living in multiple places. While examining love and desire in locations like Paris and New York City, she also depicts the traumas of cities like Gaza, Ramallah, and Baghdad. This collection skillfully explores themes of love and conflict. It is sad and happy at the same time and loaded with nostalgia and sorrow. The poems combine personal experiences with larger themes, resulting in powerful pieces that both comfort readers and make them aware of the world's harsh truths. Despite the collection's harsh issues, such as war and occupation, the poems' prayer-like tone provides a sense of hope.

The poems depict the liminal mental state of the poet where she laments over the lost identity and cherishes the luxuries of a foreign land at the same time. In some of her poems, she mourns the loss of Palestine and reflects on years of occupation and the horrors of war. At the same time, she is also an American who enjoys freedom and has a longing to travel. The specific allusion to Gaza in the poem adds a special element of gloom and dread because the Palestinians are unable to travel freely within or outside of Gaza, nor can they buy or sell products, making

Gaza the largest open-air jail in the world. Womanhood is another aspect of identity explored in the anthology. Womanhood is mixed with several natural disasters in "You, Bonsai Girl," transforming womanhood into a kind of personal narrative. Another dominant theme in this work is the concept of dreams or a fantasy dream world in which poetry takes place.

The poems in Alyan's third poetry collection, *Hijra*, explore the emotional weight of leaving one's homeland and the impact of cultural displacement. In this book, Alyan investigates personal and societal experiences with migration, exile, and the desire for home. Hala Alyan's third poetry collection reflects on the haunting details of her own transnational journey, as well as those of her mother, aunts, and other female forefathers in Gaza and Syria. The reader discovers war, immigration, and diaspora while also hearing the silenced voices of women of minorities. The poems use lyrical language along with powerful images to portray the emotional and psychological trauma of migration.

The Arabic word *Hijra*, derived from Prophet Mohammed's fearless journey to Medina, denotes an honorable departure. The courageous female speaker of these observant poems is entirely committed to design, beautiful language capable of communicating the invisible despair of a perished city. *Hijra* isn't a normal cry or lament. It is an exclusive testimony, a crucial revelation, a hard-earned melody, and an enduring legend. Through narrative poetry conveying some realistic stories of displacement in confessional-style poems, Alyan explores how a physical location is transformed into memory and a symbol of ethnicity, cultural belongingness and remembrance. The collection is divided into four main sections which serve as a voyage through time as we see how everyday life has completely been turned upside down. The second section of the book has fifteen poems, each with the name of an Arabic woman as the title. Whether or not these names correspond to actual people in the poet's life, they strike a chord

with Arab readers because of their familiarity and stress the value of women's unique identities. Alyan's poetry offers a complex view of humanity and women. There is a uniting tone throughout the poem, which expresses the pain of exiled and diasporic women.

In *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, Alyan's poetry delves into the complexities of love and heartache by exploring the depths of the human soul and the difficulties of confronting painful memories of grief and regret. Some poems capture sudden memories of loss, vividly depicting the physical traits of lovers, family members, friends, and others. Several poems also discuss the experience of alcohol detoxification and the lingering pain that follows the numbness. The collection includes both structured and prose poems, all showcasing Alyan's striking imagery, which is both beautiful and intense. She highlights the inner struggles of people, particularly those facing situations beyond their control. The poems vividly illustrate the settings of Middle East and the Midwest of the United States. She emphasises that no place can be considered completely safe because both location and family history significantly influence feelings of safety and danger. The speaker is introduced in the first poem, "Truth," who is voiced consistently throughout the anthology and bravely discusses prior issues with anorexia and alcoholism. The poems do contain some happiness and love, but by delving into the subconscious. Alyan tells a story about a haunting year, set in both physical places and emotional experiences.

In *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, Alyan delves into the personal concept of aging through stories that create a deep understanding. This collection emphasises the importance of youthful experiences in shaping personal beliefs and gaining wisdom. The collection is based more upon the small challenges and battles one faces in day-to-day life which have big consequences and effects on the human personality. It suggests that everyday situations produce the most helpful

insights into wisdom. displays a diverse and magnificent range of poetry genres. Alyan focuses on a variety of dramatic and formative experiences, including her sexual identity, the growth of alcoholism, difficulties with anorexia, cultural disputes, and family tensions, all of which are related by their depth.

In the poetry collection *The Moon That Turns You Back* Hala Alyan explores the fractured nature of memory, family, and historical record across time, especially in the aftermath of war and being forced to leave home. The poems carry a wide range of voices and experiences, where people, places, and homes become keepers of each other's stories. They move between Brooklyn, Beirut, and Jerusalem, blending time and space so that everyday life and global conflict exist side by side. Everyday moments coexist with political violence, and the longing for safety is shaped by an intimate understanding of exile. These poems examine the forces capable of uprooting individuals from home or fracturing their sense of self along with the resilience, memory, and love that restore connections to personal identity and ancestral heritage. Hala Alyan raises serious questions about the barriers to transformation and the search for peace amid perpetual change.

Hala Alyan's debut memoir, *I'll Tell You When I'm Home*, is a hauntingly intimate and poetic exploration of motherhood, identity, and the enduring scars of displacement. Alyan uses surrogacy as his last hope for motherhood following ten years of mental upheaval and miscarriages. Because of this choice, she is forced to face not only the physical loss of her unborn child while it grows inside the body of another woman, but also the emotional disintegration of her own existence. Her marital issues, old habits, and traumas come back to haunt her, as Beirut, where she grew up, falls into turmoil. In this vulnerable space, Alyan reaches back into the tapestry of her family's history, drawing strength and meaning from the

stories of generations of women who endured exile, war, and loss. She evokes the mythic figure of Scheherazade, the storyteller who survives by weaving tales, as a metaphor for her own survival and transformation.

Her memoir becomes a meditation on how to honor the memory of those who came before while nurturing a future for those yet to arrive. Through vivid recollections of her grandmothers' journeys across Palestine, Kuwait, Syria, and Lebanon, and reflections on her own fragmented upbringing between the American Midwest and Arab cities, Alyan explores the contradictions and complexities of belonging. This work offers a poetic yet honest look at what it's like to bring new life into the world while carrying the burden of ancestors who were forced from their homes. It shows how sharing stories can become a powerful way to resist injustice, heal old wounds, and keep traditions alive. As Hala Alyan writes,

What do I want to Know? I want to sit with Seham and Fatima, my grandmothers, on a park bench in Brooklyn or the marina in Beirut or Kuwait. These women who were once young, who are now dead. What I want to know are the stories they told themselves. What they told themselves to survive., to keep going. What stories they told their daughters, so that they might do the same. (11)

The works of Hala Alyan have been studied from various perspectives by critics in their research articles, blogs and book reviews. "A Critical Analysis on Identity Crisis in Hala Alyan's 'Salt Houses'" by Iram Rubab, focuses on exploring the identity crisis experienced by displaced, exiled, and banished Palestinians by examining themes of nostalgia, homelessness, dislocation, and cultural conflicts as depicted in Alyan's debut novel *Salt Houses* (2017). The study aims to delve into these concepts to better understand the struggles and complexities of Palestinian identity. Yousef Abu Amrieh, in her research paper, "Photographs, Diaspora, and Identity:

Homecoming in Hala Alyan's *The Arsonists' City*" analyses her first novel *salt Houses*. It is analysed that Alyan's novel demonstrates Ava's struggle to rediscover her identity and uncover a forty-year-old family secret. Ava's journey is set against the larger backdrop of Palestinian experiences of displacement and homelessness. "Acting Across Diaspora: Transnational Spaces and Voices in Hala Alyan's *The Arsonists' City*" by Majed Aladylah illuminates the challenges faced by diasporic and transnational voices, highlighting their struggles with cultural ambivalence, negative stereotypes, and discrimination. This paper argues that Hollywood cinema fails to support the protagonist, Mazna, in reshaping her diasporic identity to achieve success as an actress. "Claims of memory: Transgenerational traumas, fluid identities, and resistance in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses*" by Wael J. Salam contends that Hala Alyan's 2017 novel *Salt Houses* highlights the Palestinian history through the lens of traumatic memories. This article examines the significance of home, not only as a private, temporal, or spatial space but also as a representation of social fabric and cultural identity.

Alyan's works have been studied by the lens of struggles of exile, the yearning for belonging, and the lasting connections people maintain with their homeland by Dr. Sowmya T G in the article entitled "Home and Exile in the Works of Hala Alyan." Through rich language and deeply layered characters, she conveys the shared human experience of confronting displacement and searching for identity in times of instability. This study examines the themes of home and exile in Alyan's novels, focusing on how these ideas are depicted, interconnected, and resolved within the complex narratives she creates. It is further stated:

Through her richly drawn characters and lyrical prose, Alyan offers a poignant meditation on the universal human experience of longing for a place to call home, even in the face of exile and displacement. Her novels resonate with emotional

depth and authenticity, underscoring the enduring power of family, memory, and resilience amidst the complexities of the modern world. (918)

The paper "Collective Memories, and Diasporic Experiences in Hala Alyan's Poetry" explores key themes including diaspora, trans-generational trauma, displacement, and the quest for a sense of home. It argues that the identities of second-generation immigrants are formed through the legacy of ancestral experiences and collective memory. It highlights how historical events continue to shape future generations, leaving an indelible imprint they cannot shake. Alyan's work investigates ceaseless journeys, deep existential unease, and the search for a place to belong, drawing on both her personal biography and her family's history. This paper explores the intricate web of connections between diaspora, trauma, the concept of home, and nostalgia, revealing how these forces are deeply entangled in shaping the lived experiences of diasporic individuals.

Alyan is one of a new generation of Palestinian women who are writing bold new narratives. She has turned ordinary life and diasporic journeys into allegories of an ongoing gender and political struggle. Palestine and the enormous migrations of Palestinians throughout the Middle East and Midwest have figured prominently in Alyan's poetry. (Saadon, 1112)

The research paper, "Intergenerational Trauma in Joukhadar's *The Map of Salt and Stars* and Alyan's *Salt Houses*" studies the Palestinian crisis in connection with the intergenerational trauma. The paper explores the emotional and cultural impact experienced by Palestinian and Syrian Arabs following their forced displacement. It also investigates how these events impact characters both individually and collectively, while highlighting the broader cultural values that inform their lives beyond family ties, "Hala Alyan's novels, depicts a contemporary issue: the

suffering Palestinians continue to experience as a result of Israel annexing their homeland and the unrelenting battle to rebuild their lives as refugees in other countries” (Hussain and Imtiaz 198).

Critics have analysed the diaspora, identity crisis, rootlessness, sense of exile, quest for belonging and intergenerational trauma in her works but no substantial research has been conducted to trace the elements of in- between identity in her works. Hala Alyan’s works have not been analysed with the theory of Liminality to research the liminal identity of the characters. No research work has been traced which focuses on studying the element of resistance, assimilation and cultural Hybridity in the writings of Hala Alyan. No research work has been done which analyse the elements of resistance literature in the writings of Hala Alyan. Critics have critically analysed the novels and poems of Hala Alyan separately. No elaborate work has been done that includes both her novels and poems collectively. The present research will try to find how the poetry and novels of Hala Alyan, explore the experiences of liminality in the people living under Palestinian diaspora along with their resistance and identity crisis. The research work shall be focused on the following research objectives:

- To analyse the poetry and novels of Hala Alyan from the perspective of Diaspora Studies
- To critically analyse the works of Hala Alyan from the perspective of the theory of Liminality
- To evaluate and understand the idea of resistance in the works of Hala Alyan
- To understand the concept of the quest for identity and rootlessness in the works of Hala Alyan

To carry out this applied literary research qualitative approach will be used. Primary sources including- four poetry collections, two novels and some interviews by the author will be scrutinised and studied with the theory of liminality and Diaspora. Secondary sources like research papers, review articles, blogs, thesis and book reviews related to Hala Alyan's novels and Poetry collections will be utilized for the desired study. Characters and their identities will be analysed by exploring the three liminal stages i.e. pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal. The passage of people and communities from one status, place, situation and time to another will be deeply analysed to study liminality and resistance. The migration of different characters will be studied through the lens of forced and voluntary diaspora followed by efforts to assimilation and cultural hybridity.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter entitled "Palestinian Diaspora: Issues and Perspectives" elaborates on the term diaspora, its origin and its changed meaning over time. Although the main theories applied to the writings of Hala Alyan will be liminality and diaspora, yet as these theories intersect in the Postcolonial era, a glimpse of Postcolonialism has also been provided in this chapter. The concept of "diaspora" refers to a community of people who have moved away from their place of origin or where their ancestors once lived. Initially associated with the Jewish exodus, the term has since expanded to include immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates. Diasporic literature often explores the unique challenges faced by these communities. The views of Diaspora critics like Safran, Gabriel Sheffer, Sudesh Mishra a few other critics have been analysed for the understanding of the concept of diaspora. The brief history of the Palestinian diaspora has also been studied in this chapter which refers to the dispersed population originating from the region of Palestine, located in the eastern Mediterranean, encompassing parts of modern Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the West

Bank. The roots of this diaspora which trace back to the conflict between Zionists and native Palestinians from 1947 to 1948, which culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel have also been studied. The chapter discusses that the above-mentioned conflicts resulted in large-scale displacement and the formation of a global Palestinian diaspora; further, it is found that a lot of registered Palestinian refugees live in refugee camps spread across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem while others have permanently settled in countries like America and other parts of the western world. It has been studied in detail that this widespread displacement has resulted in a complex and diverse diasporic community, united by a shared identity, collective historical memory, and an ongoing struggle for independence and the right to return.

The second chapter of the thesis has been titled “Liminality and the Novels of Hala Alyan.” It starts with the origin of the term liminality from anthropology by Arnold Van Gennep and the contribution of Victor Turner for bringing this theory to the limelight and its uses in other fields of social sciences. The term "liminality" originates from the Latin word *limen*, meaning "threshold." It describes a transitional state experienced during the middle phase of rites of passage, signifying the shift of an individual from one life stage to another. The concept of liminality was first introduced to social sciences by French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep in his book *Les Rites de Passage* (1909), which was translated into English in 1960. Van Gennep defines liminality as a state of being “in-between” and examines it in relation to life events such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Liminality is characterized by three stages: pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal. Van Gennep also categorizes rites into four types, each involving the transition of individuals from one status, place, situation, or time to another. The key terms associated with liminality like, *communitas*, *liminoid*, *liminal space*, *permanent*

liminality etc. have also been studied in detail in this chapter. The novels of Hala Alyan have been analysed with the theory of liminality in this chapter.

The third chapter of the thesis with the title, “Tracing Liminality in the Poems of Hala Alyan,” analyses the four poetry collections of Hala Alyan with the Lense of liminality. Three stages of liminality along with the key terms like *communitas*, *liminoid* and *liminal space*, *liminal passage* etc. have been applied to the characters and situations of Hala Alyan’s Poems. Hala Alyan has depicted the life and challenges of Palestinian migrants in a foreign land they are liminal beings because they are neither Palestinians nor native inhabitants of a foreign land which creates so many liminal dilemmas in their lives and they have turned into liminal beings. The key terms associated with liminality have been applied to the poems of Hala Alyan and the liminal characters, elements and incidents have been traced out. This chapter has traced that the characters in Hala Alyan's work are caught between two opposing forces: on one side, they are influenced by modern lifestyles characterized by behaviors like alcoholism, smoking, and engagement with open and queer sexual cultures, which also reflect a loss of traditional faith; on the other side, they are anchored to the cultural and religious heritage of their lost homeland, holding onto beliefs and teachings from sources like the Quran, Suras, and Christianity. The pull of these opposite forces put them at a liminal condition.

The fourth chapter of the thesis is entitled, “The Quest for Identity and Rootlessness in the Works of Hala Alyan,” which starts with defining the term identity as the characteristics, qualities, beliefs, and attributes that define an individual or group. It encompasses various aspects, including personal attributes like personality traits, values, and interests, as well as social factors such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, and cultural background. Further, the identity of various characters of Hala Alyan has been analysed with the theory of liminality.

The characters who have not changed with the migration and still stick to their faith, values and culture are put at the pre-liminal stage of identity transformation. Those who have changed a little with the passage of time and the influence of the environment but also hold the native values have been termed as at the liminal stage of identity transformation and the characters who have fully assimilated into the foreign culture have been termed at the post liminal stage of the identity transformation.

The fifth chapter bears the title, “Hala Alyan and the Idea of Resistance, Assimilation and Cultural Hybridity” and it begins with the meaning of the terms, resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity. Resistance refers to the act of opposing or rejecting dominant cultural norms and practices; assimilation is the process by which individuals or groups adopt the cultural traits of another group, often leading to the loss of their original identity; and cultural hybridity is the blending of elements from different cultures, resulting in new, hybrid identities that reflect the complexities of multicultural interactions. The chapter traces the elements of violent and passive resistance of the characters in the poems and novels of Hala Alyan and shows that Alyan has used resistance in the form of remembrance too. She tries to locate the instances of assimilation of the migrants. When the migrants are neither able to fully assimilate nor erode the cultural influence, they take an in-between passage, which is an admixture of both native values and culture with the values and culture of the host land. This admixture results in cultural hybridity, which is a liminal phenomenon. The instances of cultural hybridity in the works of Hala Alyan have been traced and analysed in this chapter.

The thesis focuses upon finding the liminal identity and other elements of liminality in the Palestinian diaspora as depicted in the writings of Hala Alyan. It traces the elements of resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity in the characters and situations aroused by

migration and displacement in the life of Palestinian migrants portrayed by Hala Alyan. It is easy to trace these elements in the novels of Hala Alyan but while analysing her poetry some pre assumptions have been made to understand the narrator, the tone and the omniscient authors. As Poetry often compresses deep emotion or abstract ideas into tightly structured lines, where every word, rhythm, and image carries symbolic weight.

Chapter 1

Palestinian Diaspora: Theoretical Perspectives

In the present world of globalisation and transnational movements, the whole world has become a global village. People have settled far from their homelands to the remote corners of the world. Despite living on the farthest corners, they can't fully detach themselves from their roots. Their physical appearance, tone of language, religious rights and some other ways keep on reminding them about their ethnicity. With the advancements in technology and cross-cultural ties once again a new era has initiated where people want to know more about their origin and their roots. To know more about themselves they connect with the people with whom they share common language, culture and other attributes. This association of like-minded people having the same cultural background and ethnicity has given birth to diaspora.

The term diaspora has been used for the individuals or groups of people who have to move away from their homeland or place where they had been formerly residing. The concept of diaspora is chiefly concerned with migration and dispersal. According to Kevin Kenny, "The Greek noun *diasporá* derives from the verb *diaspeirein*, a compound of "*dia*" (over or through) and "*speirein*" (to scatter or sow). The word emerged from the proto-Indo-European root, *spr*, which can be found today in such English words as "spore," "sperm," "spread," and "disperse"" (21). The term was originally used to describe the exodus of the Jews from their ancestral home particularly after the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The Jewish Diaspora was related to the scattering of Jewish communities throughout different parts of the world and their maintenance of Jewish Identity outside their

ancestral home. Khachig Toloyan, in the preface by the editor to the first issue of *Journal Diaspora*, defines, "Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment"(5). He further elaborates on the comprehensive meaning of diaspora by adding some more communities and causes of dispersion apart from the traditional migrants and dispersed population. He adds,

The term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (Toloyan 4-5).

Diaspora, as a condition of displacement and cultural negotiation, is inherently linked to postcolonialism, which interrogates the historical and ongoing impacts of colonial domination. Post-colonialism examines the impacts of colonization on cultures and societies which depicts a chronological phase denoting the period following independence, particularly in historical contexts after World War II. However, starting in the late 1970s, literary analysts began to use the term to explore the diverse cultural consequences of colonization. It goes beyond solely addressing colonialism and its consequences. Postcolonialism analyses the lasting effects of colonialism on former colonies and their people, focusing on how imperial power has shaped cultural identities, social structures, and systems of knowledge. Emerging after the formal end of colonial rule in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, postcolonialism builds on earlier anti-colonial resistance movements, nationalist struggles, and intellectual traditions that questioned Western dominance. The study of postcolonialism encompasses topics like oppression, imperialism, and identity, offering a framework to analyze and comprehend the global power dynamics and exploitative relationships between central and peripheral nations. The study of the influential

authority of representation in colonized societies started in the late 1970s with works like Said's *Orientalism*. This exploration paved the way for the formulation of colonialist discourse theory, with major contributions of critics like Spivak and Bhabha. As stated in *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*,

‘Post-colonialism/ postcolonialism’ is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects and most importantly perhaps the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre-and post-independence nations and communities. (Ashcroft et al. 169)

Diaspora and postcolonialism are interconnected frameworks that explore the effects of colonialism, displacement, and identity formation in a global context. Postcolonial theory critically examines the cultural, political, and psychological legacies of colonialism and imperial domination, while diaspora studies focus on the experiences of people who have been dispersed from their homeland. The diasporic condition which is marked by dislocation, hybridity, and longing, mirrors the postcolonial struggle with fragmented identities and cultural negotiation. Both theories engage with the liminal spaces where individuals and communities exist "in-between" cultures, nations, and identities. In postcolonial contexts, diaspora becomes a key site for exploring how colonial histories continue to shape global migration patterns, racial hierarchies, and national belonging. Moreover, diaspora often embodies resistance against the dominant narratives of nation-states, reflecting a postcolonial critique of homogenized identity and cultural purity. It highlights the formation of hybrid identities, the persistence of

transnational ties, and the reimagining of "home" beyond physical geography. As such, diaspora is not only a consequence of colonialism but also a lens through which postcolonial scholars analyze power, memory, and cultural survival.

Over time, the horizon of the term diaspora has also been broadened and applied to various other groups and communities who have experienced forced or voluntary migration and dispersion from their place of origin. In the present scenario, it is commonly used to describe any group of people who have been displaced from their homeland and have settled in different parts of the world while maintaining a sense of connection and identity with their cultural or ethnic heritage. According to Sheffer, "Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands" (3).

Diaspora has been divided into two types by some scholars termed as forced diaspora and voluntary diaspora. Forced migration frequently results from catastrophic occurrences like war, imperialist invasion, slavery, or natural disasters like prolonged starvation or drought. Due to the forceful expulsion, the members of a forced diaspora frequently experience sentiments of oppression, loss, and longing for their native country. A voluntary diaspora, on the other hand, is a group of people who have left their countries of origin willingly in search of better economic opportunities, educational aspirations, and intellectual pursuits and wish to settle in a country of their dreams with more facilities and good living conditions. The dispersal and migration of the people were influenced due to British imperialism and colonialism by the West too. The book, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* states,

Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movements of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonization itself

was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world.

(Ashcroft et al. 68-69)

According to Safran, there are some key factors to define diaspora, there must be a dispersion from the homeland to two or more foreign regions and those who have left their country of origin have a collective memory of it; they believe they will always be prejudiced in their new country; they idealize their presumed ancestral home; and there is a belief that all members of that society should be entirely devoted to it. William Safran in his essay "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" gives six basic characteristics of diaspora,

1) They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and the existence of such a relationship importantly defines their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity. (83-84)

The borders and boundaries that diaspora communities create for themselves, Robin Cohen contends, deserve greater examination than their essential features. The writer argues, “Diasporas are caught up with and defined against (1) the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous, and especially autochthonous, claims by “tribal” peoples” (307). The diaspora community might have attachments to various places and cultures, and their identities may be influenced by all those multiple experiences. Sometimes the dominant national culture tries to assimilate immigrants into a singular national identity by deliberate efforts to make them leave the previous cultural affiliations. Cohen criticizes such assimilation approaches as it is really difficult to bind a multifaceted identity into a singular national identity. The diaspora communities may resist the dominant national culture; they may fully assimilate and there are chances of mixing both the traditional and dominant culture. In this way, the relation of the diaspora community with the host land can’t be classified into a simple binary of assimilation and resistance.

All the aspects and typologies of Diaspora have been attempted to be covered by Robin Cohen in his seminal work *Global Diasporas an Introduction*, in which the first chapter discusses about the difference between diaspora and migration. According to him, all the people who are migrating from one nation, state and place to another one for work, studies or other works cannot be considered diasporic. He tries to clarify this difference by providing these four essential characteristics of diaspora,

Members of a defined group have been dispersed to many destinations; they construct a shared identity; they still somewhat orient themselves to an original ‘home’; and they demonstrate an affinity with other members of the group dispersed to other places. (1)

Robin Cohen further talks about the nine strands of diaspora. As different strands contribute to the making of a rope, in the same way, the given nine strands collectively make diaspora. After having a review of literature on diaspora, it has become clear that diaspora is not merely the dispersion of people. Before labeling someone as diasporic, it must be checked whether that group is diasporic or a mere migrant. To deal with the issue of diaspora, the nine strands of diasporic rope can prove as a touchstone. These strands are- “Dispersal, expansion, retention, idealization, return, distinctiveness, apprehension, creativity and solidarity” (3). Robin Cohen further classifies Diaspora into six categories which are victim diaspora, labour diaspora, imperial diaspora, trade diaspora, deterritorialized diaspora and incipient diaspora with further examples of communities and people who can be classified under these types. The author considers the Jews, Africans, Armenians, Irish, Palestinians, and many contemporary refugee groups as examples of victim diaspora. Chinese, Japanese, Turks, Italians, and North Africans are termed as examples of labor diaspora. The British, Russians, and other colonial powers have been considered an imperial diaspora. The author mentions the Lebanese and Chinese as trade diasporas. The Caribbean peoples, Romani, Muslims, Sindhis, Parsis, and other religious groups are examples of deterritorialized diasporas. The Afghans, Gulf workers, and Turks in Germany have been covered under incipient diasporas. (11)

“The ‘diaspora’ diaspora” a seminal article by Rogers Brubaker talks about the growing interest in the diaspora after the late 1980s, and briefs about various types and classifications of diaspora. But he believes that too much categorization of the term will make every human being a diasporic being and no one will be considered distinctive. In his words, “The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora” (3). He further coins three core elements of diaspora which are- dispersion in space, orientation to a homeland and boundary-

maintenance. Dispersion in space refers to diaspora groups of people who have been dispersed from their original homeland and are now they are living in different parts of the world. The dispersion can be forced or voluntary, traumatic or peaceful, and can cross state borders or not. Orientation to a homeland depicts that diasporas maintain a connection to a real or imagined homeland, which serves as a source of identity, values, ethnicity, and loyalty. This homeland can be a physical place related to a mythical or historic past or it can be a cultural or linguistic community. Boundary-maintenance: depicts that diasporas maintain boundaries between themselves and others, which can be physical, cultural, linguistic, or symbolic. These boundaries help in defining the diaspora as a distinct and recognizable entity, and can also be used to negotiate their relationships with other groups or nations (5-6).

The history of diaspora formation has been classified by Reis into three key periods named, the classical period including the ancient Greek, Jewish, and Armenian diasporas; the contemporary period including the African diaspora and economic migrants; and the late modern period including a much wider variety of diasporic communities (41). Reis quotes Baylis and Smith for highlighting the role of mass media and computer networks in maintaining contact across borders and nations in context with the diaspora in the era of globalization. According to her the diasporas of contemporary times are formed concerning the globalized scenario, people have been displaced more because of work opportunities, higher studies, wish to settle abroad and other benefits rather than trauma or disaster. As she comments,

Contemporary diaspora are complex and the reason for their formation, manifold.

This period is characterized by dislocation and fragmentation. Whereas classical diaspora are to a large extent directly associated with exile, as is the case of the Jews, the Palestinian... (47)

In *Diaspora Criticism*, Sudesh Mishra talks about “The Three Pillars of Diaspora Criticism”. According to Mishra, there are various terms like hybridity, multi-locality, nomadism, and double consciousness associated with diaspora but the most important are transnationalism, globalization, and modernity. He elaborates on these concepts for a deeper understanding of diaspora (131). He further asserts that theorists come from diverse fields and bring various perspectives to the study of diasporas. Although the study of diaspora is interdisciplinary, he tries to classify diaspora criticism in three distinct phases. The first phase, named the "scene of dual territoriality," stresses the ethno-national community's position between the host land and homeland. The second phase termed as, "situational laterality," is influenced by post-structuralist theories, and it focuses on dynamic movements across multiple territories and challenges fixed national ideologies. The third phase is marked by a "historicist turn," and it emphasizes the importance of specifying historical contexts and socio-economic factors in understanding diasporas (174). Sudesh Mishra contends that diaspora criticism is most effective when it thoroughly examines, “the varieties of historical continuity and rupture that exist (a) within and across the different diasporas, (b) within and across their cultural and aesthetic practices, and (c) between a single diaspora and its cultural aesthetic creations” (175).

Diaspora Politics at Home Abroad by Gabriel Sheffer can be considered a descriptive account of all the aspects of diaspora and its aftereffects. Sheffer tries to have a triangular study of the relationship between the diasporic community, their homeland and their host land. He believes that rapid globalization has led to a turning point in the increasing recognition of migrants and diasporas. These trends led to more migration, permanent settlement of migrants, and the creation of new diaspora communities. He has stressed more on the portrait of

Contemporary Diasporas. He has tried to elaborate on the Ethno-national Diaspora along with its Non-ethnic and Trans-national Formations. The book is an answer to all the queries associated with the formation of a diaspora, its organizations, and the difference between incipient diaspora and mature diasporas. The issues of the relationship between the diaspora community and the homeland with the migrants and returnees have further led to the meaning and definition of Stateless and State-Linked Diasporas (ix-xi).

The term ethno-national diasporas for the groups of people who have permanently left their home countries to live in another country, while still maintaining ties to their homeland has been used by Sheffer. Ethno-national diasporas can be based on ethnicity, nationality, or religion. He gives some examples of ethno-national diasporas including Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Africans, Palestinians, Jews, Kurds, Armenians etc. These groups are all diverse in their ways, but they are united by their shared experience of migration and displacement. The ethno-national diaspora in the words of Sheffer,

An ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. (9-10)

The issues of Diaspora, border and transnational identities have been addressed by Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. She believes that the twenty-first century has witnessed mass movement and migration of people. There might be various reasons for this movement and “people on the move may be labour migrants (both ‘documented’ and

‘undocumented’), highly-qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, students, refugees and asylum seekers, or the household members of previous migrants” (175). She stresses to study Diaspora in context of its “historically contingent genealogies.” The writer believes that there is a difference between homing desire and homeland. She believes that all the diaspora community doesn’t want to return to their homeland. She tries to define diaspora space by its relation with border and dislocation. In her words,

Diaspora space is ‘inhabited’ not only by migrated subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as ‘indigenous.’ As such, the concept of diaspora space foregrounds the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put.’ (178)

The concept of diaspora evokes the image of a journey or multiple journeys for Brah. But she clarifies that every journey shall not be mistook as diasporic because, “diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere” (179). The writer stresses that diaspora doesn’t deal only with trivial issues like who the migrants are and why they have migrated. On the other hand, diaspora is a complex study that analyses all social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of migration and power relations. She believes that “the concept of diaspora centers on the configurations of power which differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them about to one another” (180). In this way the journeys, their memories and their narration to upcoming generation show that the diasporic identity cannot be fixed, as it keeps on changing and people of different social and economic backgrounds, perceive the same event in different ways. She further studies diaspora in relation with the minorities and homing desire for home. To summaries,

“The concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire. The homing desire, however, is not the same as the desire for a ‘homeland’. Contrary to general belief, not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Moreover, the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary does not mean that diasporian subjectivity is ‘rootless. I argue for a distinction between ‘feeling at home’ and declaring a place as home. Processes of diasporic identity formation are exemplars par excellence of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process. The relationship between the two is subject to the politics in play under given sets of circumstances. In other words, the concept of diaspora refers to multi-locationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries. (194)

Diaspora has been studied in terms of cultural identity by Stuart Hall. He argues that the new world is diasporic, diverse and full of hybridity. He doesn’t use the term diaspora literally, rather it has been used metaphorically. Hall believes that diaspora is not about a group of people who have dispersed in the various corners of the world and who are insistent upon returning to their homeland, at any cost. This is a narrow and old perspective of diaspora, which can be related to colonialism and imperialism. The plight of Palestinians due to the return of Jews to the promised land can be quoted as an apt example of the traditional concept of diaspora. Rather, diaspora is a more complex experience. It is about diversity, hybridity, and transformation. People of the diaspora may have a strong connection to their ancestral homeland, but their identity is also shaped by their experiences in the places where they live and work. They may identify with multiple cultures and languages, and their identities may change over time. As Hall says, “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves

anew, through transformation and difference” (235). Clifford studies diaspora with borders and tries to study the diasporic culture. He further states that,

In the late 20th century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations). Some are more diasporic than others. I have suggested that it is not possible to define diaspora sharply, either by recourse to essential features or to privative oppositions. But it is possible to perceive a loosely coherent, adaptive constellation of responses to dwelling-in-displacement. The currency of these responses is inescapable. (310)

A revolution in the study of the African diaspora was brought about by Paul Gilroy’s book *The Black Atlantic*, which also engaged with Hall’s concept of culture. As Christine Chivallon comments, “The writings of Gilroy and Hall propose the second interpretation, a model that privileges hybridity and can be called “hybrid.” The diaspora is no longer seen as unitary; instead, its sociality is seen as based on movement, interconnection, and mixed references” (359). Gilroy believes that any culture developed in the black diaspora can’t be considered pure or original. The Black diaspora is formed by people who have been displaced from their African homeland to the European world. Because of their migration, Black diaspora cultures have been influenced by a lot of socio-cultural, geographic and economic factors. They live in an intercultural state by mixing their indigenous culture and the culture of the land they have migrated to, despite adhering only to the ethnic or national culture.

In the contemporary context where national borders are often crossed and cross-border ties increasingly form a ‘Global Village,’ Thomas Faist highlights both the distinction between diaspora and transnationalism and the recognition of their rising significance. In the book entitled *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Faist explains,

Although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries – and, more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations. (9)

For a better understanding of the terms, Faist tries to define them. He elaborates on the newer and old meanings of diaspora in terms of the reason for migration, the cross-border relations of the diasporic community with their native place and host country, and the integration of diasporic communities in the host countries. He highlights the issues of discrimination and marginalization of the migrants by the native people. He states, “Assimilation would mean the end of diaspora, whether ethnically or religiously defined. Newer notions of diaspora emphasise cultural hybridity in the wake of dissemi-nation” (13). Further, elaborating on the concept of transnationalism Faist comments,

Diasporic transnationalism refers to the ties of migrants and their collectives who entertain sustained social formations across borders while being settled in countries of immigration, thereby forming transnational fields or spaces.

Transnationalism through mobility, by contrast, is characterised by circulation and thus perpendicular movement across borders. (18)

A question about the future of diaspora has been posed by Kevin Kenny in his book *Diaspora A Very Short Introduction* with a three-dimensional approach towards migration. “Movement, connectivity, and return” are the three dimensions of migration given by Kenny. Kenny believes that diaspora has various aspects related to the pattern of dispersal, the presence

or collapse of the homeland and the relationship with the nation-states. He presents two contradictory ideas of diaspora related to their usage and purpose,

Diaspora in the first sense has a tendency to flatten out differences, to homogenize, to reduce complexity and diversity to a single type. In its second, more critical sense, however, diaspora can be used to draw important analytical distinctions between different kinds of human experience. (116)

Kenny believes that the concept of diaspora should be wisely used as it may be associated with the pain, discrimination and genocide of people but every migration is not exodus. Even the experience of the diaspora population related to ordinary people and the elite group of society will be different from each other. In the same way, “Migrants who originate in the same countries have significantly different histories abroad, depending on where they settle” (118). One approach believes that the migrants from a common nation share common characteristics while the other approach focuses on the movement and the relations with the homeland and the host land. In the present scenario when the nations of origin are giving special benefits related to dual citizenship and voting rights to the diaspora population the diaspora is taking new forms.

The Literature of the Indian Diaspora Theorizing the diasporic imaginary by Vijay Mishra starts the introduction with the words, “All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its way. Diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport” (1). He associates the diaspora with hyphenated identity, trauma and displacement. According to the author, the term is both “celebrated and maligned”. The late postmodernity celebrates diaspora, whereas the term has been maligned by early modernity. In the late-modern context, the diaspora has been called fluid and the diasporic communities are considered to be existing on a border area where the most

dynamic forms of interaction occur, and ethnicity and nationality remain distinct from each other. He further discusses the terms, mourning, trauma, travel and translation of diasporic imaginary. He defines diasporic imaginary in given words,

The diasporic imaginary is a term, I use to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement. I use the word 'imaginary' in both its original Lacanian sense and in its more flexible current usage, ... as the state of 'identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing... (14)

Hala Alyan has also depicted diasporic elements in her poems and novels and she has dealt with Palestinian diaspora. The themes of diaspora and transnational connections in her works is inspired by her own Palestinian origin and American upbringing. In an interview with title, 'I Belonged Nowhere': A Story Of Displacement, From A Novelist Who Knows' by Steve Inskeep, Alyan shares about her parentage and the multiple migrations of her family, her birth in Carbondale and childhood in Kuwait and Syria. As Alyan comments:

My parents met and married in Kuwait and then when my mother became pregnant with me — in the Middle East you get what your father has in terms of passport. My mother had a Lebanese passport my father had Palestinian travel documents. ... We returned to Kuwait and then after the invasion we were in Syria for a little bit and then they sought asylum in the States. So my passport in a lot of ways enabled us to then go to the States. ... Of course, she couldn't have known that in anchoring me she was anchoring the entire family.

Palestine is a region in the eastern Mediterranean Sea that includes parts of modern Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. The term "Palestine" has been used to refer to this region for centuries, and it is a holy place for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The political status of Palestine is complicated, as it has been occupied by Israel and the Palestinians have been marginalized to the area of West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian territories are home to millions of Palestinians, who are seeking to establish their independent state. Palestinians have a long history of migrating to other countries. Since the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, Palestinians have been forced to flee from their homeland on multiple occasions. As a result, there is a large Palestinian diaspora community spread across the world. The majority of Palestinian refugees are from the 1948 and 1967 wars, but there are also many refugees from other conflicts and displacement crises. Many Palestinian refugees have settled in neighboring Arab countries, but others have migrated to South America, North America, and Europe. “Palestinians are the descendants of all the indigenous peoples who lived in Palestine over the centuries; since the seventh century, they have been predominantly Muslim in religion and almost completely Arab in language and culture” (Dowty, 221).

The Israel-Palestinian conflict has been elaborated in detail by Kevin Kenny in his book *Diaspora A very Short Introduction*. He elaborates that Zionism called for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Zionism was a movement that wanted to create a Jewish state, and its followers believed that Palestine was the rightful homeland of the Jewish people. The Jews started returning to the region of Palestine by the early 20th century. During World War 1, the British supported Arab revolts against the Ottoman Empire, promising them independence after the war. However, in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British government also pledged its support for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Kenny believes that

“From the perspective of the existing Arab population, any attempt to set up a Jewish state within Palestine was a form of colonization that could only lead to displacement” (77). On the declaration of the state of Israel for the Jewish people in 1948, Kevin Kenny writes,

In calling for the establishment of a Jewish state, the declaration concluded, the UN had at last recognized “the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.” But what of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine? How could they, too, be masters of their own fate? A tragic irony of the contemporary era is that the partial dismantling of one diaspora has led directly to the formation of another. (80)

The conflict from 1947 to 1948 between the Zionists and native Palestinians, resulted in the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel. This event was simultaneously perceived as *Al-Nakba*, which means the catastrophe, by the Palestinians. According to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, this event gave rise to the Palestinian refugee crisis, displacing approximately 750,000 Palestinians, which accounted for 75 percent of the Palestinian Arab population. A significant portion of them left their villages out of fear of violence and battles, while others were forcibly expelled or prevented from returning to their homes. Ultimately, the majority of these refugees were denied the opportunity to return to the land that would become Israel. Instead, they sought refuge in the West Bank, which was under Jordan's control during the conflict and later declared as Jordanian territory in 1950, or in the Gaza Strip under Egyptian administration. Many others fled to Lebanon and Syria (“Palestinian Diaspora”). As, Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer remarks,

One of the grim paradoxes of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is that the foundation of the state of Israel, intended to create a safe haven for the ‘archetypical’ Jewish

diaspora, spelt the immediate diasporisation of the Arab Palestinians. The territorialisation of the Jewish diaspora spurred a new ‘wandering identity’ and the Palestinians became a ‘refugee nation.’ To the Palestinians, the birth of Israel is thus remembered as the catastrophe, *al-nakba*, to imprint the suffering caused by dispersal, exile, alienation and denial. (1)

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in 1964 by Palestinians residing outside of Palestine, specifically in the diaspora, for the political rights of Palestinians. Then came another setback for the Palestinian refugees with the Six-Day War of 1967, at this time Israel took control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, which resulted in the second wave of Palestinian displacement. Approximately 250,000 individuals from the West Bank and 75,000 from Gaza were forced to leave their homes between June 1967 and December 1968. They got refuge in countries like Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, and suffered with multiple dislocations. On various occasions, Palestinians residing in Arab nations had to face political upheavals and displacements, like during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and the initial Gulf War (1991). The Gulf War of 1991 further expelled a large number of Palestinians and their families from Kuwait. In 2003 the fall of Iraq’s president Saddam Hussein worsened the conditions of the Palestinians in Iraq as earlier Iraq was supporting the Palestinians, now the Palestinians again faced many troubles and some of them tried to leave Iraq permanently (“Palestinian Diaspora”). Julie Peteet observes that “Palestinians live the existential conditions of exile and grapple with the perils of statelessness daily. With often firsthand knowledge of their homes, memory is certainly more recent and visceral” (633).

According to the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRAWA) Palestinian Refugees are, “persons whose normal place of residence

was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” It further states, “Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.” Julie Peteet believes that the refugees are those people who live in temporary homes and she further elaborates, “A foreboding sense of temporariness, and concomitant insecurity, is pervasive among Palestinian refugees. Even though many camps now resemble small towns or are vibrant extensions of urban centers, there is still an uneasiness over their future” (633). Since 1948, the right of return for Palestinian refugees has been a central issue for Palestinians and the Arab world as a whole. It is a core aspiration for many Palestinians living abroad, especially those in Palestinian refugee camps to return to their homeland because the camps merely allow them to live in, but they are not the owner of the land occupied by the refugee camps. As Kevin Kenny asserts, “Palestinians who become citizens elsewhere (mainly in Jordan) do not, as they have not regained their homes and property. They and their descendants remain refugees today” (82). Most of the Palestinians have been forced to leave their homes due to war and the declaration of the independent state of Israel, while many others have migrated abroad in search of better job opportunities, and education, or to escape religious persecution:

Palestinian refugee camps hardly constitute an environment of creative new beginnings. In Lebanon, they conceivably were places of creativity in the 1950s and 1960s, when UNRWA education offered hope for the future and return seemed possible, and from 1968 to 1982, when they enjoyed a modicum of internal autonomy... This short-lived period was undercut by the Lebanese civil war (1975-91) and the Israeli invasion of 1982. Impoverished and tightly

controlled by the Lebanese government, they became places of despair and hopelessness. A similar environment of hopelessness, despair, and anger characterizes the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (Peteet 637-638)

Being a Palestinian Edward Said addresses the issues related to Palestinians in his book *The Question of Palestine*. The beginning of the book presents an argument in favor of Palestine for those doesn't believe that there was any country of Palestinians. According to Said, the modern world understands the concept of Palestinians in relation to the refugees and people living in fester camps. As he gives an example of the popular mindset of the people of Israel, "In Israel today it is the custom officially to refer to the Palestinians as "so-called Palestinians," which is a somewhat gentler phrase than Golda Meir's flat assertion in 1969 that the Palestinians did not exist" (4). But he cannot accept the denial of that land where he belongs and other innumerable Palestinian refugees' dream to return. He further explains,

That there had been such an entity as Palestine until 1948, or that Israel's existence—its "independence," as the phrase goes—was the result of the eradication of Palestine: of these truths beyond dispute most people who follow events in the Middle East are more or less ignorant, or unaware. But what is most important is the continuing avoidance or ignorance of the existence today of about four million Muslim and Christian Arabs who are known to themselves and to others as Palestinians. They make up the question of Palestine, and if there is no country called Palestine it is not because there are no Palestinians. (5)

Abdalwahid Abbas Noman discusses Palestinian diaspora in a lay man's language in his research paper "Endless Agony and Death in Diaspora: A Study of Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky And Water*." The research paper focuses more upon Abulhawa's depiction of the

real-life problems, trauma and exploitation of the people of Palestine during the exodus. The Israeli occupation has resulted in a human-made catastrophe that has led to one of the longest and most significant diasporas of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Consequently, the Nakba occupies a central place in Palestinian history and literature, attracting extensive attention from writers and scholars around the world. According to Abdalwahid Abbas Noman,

Palestinian diaspora refers to the mass exodus of Palestinian people who were forcibly expelled by the Zionist occupation from Palestine to different countries. The majority of these dispersed people went to Arab countries and still living there as refugees in camps. The rest of them went to foreign countries and they could not come back home till today. Statistical reports estimate that three-quarters of Palestinians left their homes in 1948. (22)

The Palestinian Diaspora in Europe: Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation by Abbas Shiblak discusses that “Palestinian Diaspora has been in formation over the past century although it had acquired special dimensions - as a 'victims Diaspora'- with the mass expulsion of Palestinians following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948” (8). He further argues that while some accept the term "diaspora" to describe Palestinian communities residing outside the Arab region, while some don't consider the Palestinians living in neighboring Arab states as diasporic community. Those scholars argue that their shared language, religion, and cultural background, along with the majority status of Palestinians in places like Jordan, make it challenging to view them as diasporic communities. However, the term diaspora has been solely used by the theorists for the people living out of their homeland and although some of the Palestinians are living in the neighboring countries but, all of them don't have the same rights and privileges they had in their own country. The conflict between the Zionists and the

Palestinians has played a significant role in strengthening the quest for the identity of Palestinians. Abbas Shiblak points it out that the rise of the contemporary Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) in the 1960s, particularly among Palestinians living in exile, has played a special role in revitalizing and reconstructing Palestinian nationalist identity after 1948. He asserts,

This reality is that the inability of Palestinian refugees to integrate in host Arab societies and the continuing policies of discrimination against them undoubtedly enhanced their distinctive sense of identity as ‘undesirable’ minorities. This factor contributed towards deepening their sense of national identity and their sense of a shared destiny, whether they happened to be inside Palestine or among the scattered communities in exile. (8)

Mohamed Kamel Doraï, states that the Palestinian diaspora is geographically dispersed - in countries that are neighbors Israel, across the Arab world and also in Europe and North America. The study of the networks that evolved between these geographical locations highlights the significance of family and village organizations which have been inherited from the social organization of Palestine before 1948 and were rebuilt in exile. Earlier society was organized locally, around a village, today it is organized transnationally, between different countries. However, these transnational networks are maintained only by the Palestinian elite due to their influence and dual nationality. The Palestinian bourgeoisie, the Palestinians who are not refugees and live in cities or the West, do not have the same deep connection to the place where they live as Palestinian refugees. For the common people who live in camps situation is different, as Shiblak, remarks, “Until a full sovereign and viable Palestinian state becomes a reality, these

diasporic communities will not be able to enjoy any physical but only virtual links with their homeland” (17).

About collective memory of Palestine and life in refugee camps, Mohamed Kamel Dorai comments that Palestinian families pass down memories of the exodus from Palestine orally, through stories and recollections of their past lives. This helps to justify the continued existence of the refugee camps, which now have a new meaning for their inhabitants. The camps are not just places to survive, but also symbols of the exodus itself. He believes that “Palestinian ethnic identity is based primarily on two elements: the village of origin and family networks. The village is a privileged place of memory for the Palestinians because It represents the very expression of their Arabic Palestinian culture and identity” (92). The refugee camps are often laid out in a way that reflects the way that people lived in Palestine before they were forced to leave. Refugees from the same village or region often settled together in the camps, and different parts of the camps are often named after the villages that the refugees came from. This helps the refugees to stay connected to the memory of their homeland and each other. The connection of memory of homeland and life in refugee camps has been aptly described by Mohamed Kamel Dorai in the following words,

The refugee camps have simultaneously become a place to recall the homeland (by safeguarding the old social order, and by the dissemination of memories and Palestinian images) and a place to wait to return home. They can be understood as memory areas, where the permanence of the homeland is registered in everyday life. Palestinians have recreated, in the space of the refugee camps, a temporal continuity. They 'feel at home.' (94)

The social psychology of the Palestinians has been studied by Mohammed A. Bamyeh, with the memory of Palestinians and the reality. According to him, the Palestinians had presumed that the diasporic life was temporary and that after some time they would be able to return to their homes. As he observes, “Even now, it is quite common to hear not only elders of the first diasporic generation but also their descendants recount how their families left all their property, furniture, businesses and other belongings intact...” (91). People have even kept the keys of their ancient homes along with the papers of the property. The diasporic community believed that they are the victims of injustice, “a because their ancient homeland has been usurped by an aggressor, along with their homes, orchards, businesses, properties and the richly connected social life of their towns, villages and extended families” (92). Bamyeh considers the Palestinian diaspora unchosen as it was not the voluntary movement of the people, even after so many years of the migration the Palestinians are unable to forget the memories of their homeland which was snatched from them by any conspiracy. He further elaborates,

These defining features of the social psychology of the Palestinian diaspora – temporary, unjust, unchosen, accidental – powerfully informed widespread practices aimed primarily at producing and maintaining a memory oriented to keeping alive the image of Palestine and the dedication of subsequent diasporic generations to its cause... They also encompass new public intellectual practices, such as encyclopedic compendiums of Palestinian life as well as more specific city histories and city associations. (93)

After having a detailed study of diaspora, there rises a question about the difference between diaspora and Palestinian diaspora. Tamara N. Rayan answers this question her seminal research article entitled, “Transformative provenance: memory work in the Palestinian diaspora.”

The Palestinian diaspora is unique and complex on the bases of its forceful expulsion of a large amount of population, multiple migration and the dispersal of the Palestinians all over the world.

As mentioned in the research article,

The Palestinian diaspora is uniquely complex. First, the Palestinian and Jewish peoples view the same land as their exclusive homelands and mobilize their diasporas in their long-lasting dispute. Second, Palestinians have been exiled multiple times over multiple generations, so homeland has become a spatial referent that is not stable or fixed. Third, due to the scattering of Palestinians worldwide, each diaspora locale has developed their own unique group consciousness. With such complexity, the lens used to understand diaspora must be flexible enough to accommodate the reality of multiple identities and phases of diasporization over time. This investigation of Palestinians in Southeast Michigan, therefore, draws connections to the collective histories and identity formations shared by the larger Palestinian diaspora. (741-742)

The Israel–Palestine conflict is rooted in colonial, nationalist, territorial, and historical factors that have created a long-standing division between Palestinians and Israelis. Although religious and cultural issues influence the conflict, its central cause is the competing claim to the same homeland. The prolonged violence has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza, where civilians have suffered extensive loss and displacement. International actors have played an important but largely ineffective role, often prioritizing strategic interests over international law. Despite repeated peace initiatives, no comprehensive settlement has been achieved. Internal political divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have further complicated peace negotiations. Igli Domi and Kristina Lata in their research article, “Israel-

Palestine Conflict: A Retrospective Analysis from Origins to the Present Day and Prospects for the Future,” stresses that a durable solution is required for addressing the core political disputes through a comprehensive peace agreement and respect for Palestinian self-determination.

Sustainable peace also depends on meeting urgent humanitarian needs and ensuring equal recognition of the rights and security of both peoples. The research article argues that balanced international engagement, accountability, and constructive dialogue are essential for conflict resolution. Without these measures, the humanitarian crisis and political instability are likely to continue. Their final words say, “The two-state solution remains the most just and sustainable theoretical option, but its implementation requires the development of a new international architecture, one that ensures not only security and stability, but also transinstitutional justice and institutional reconstruction” (82).

The Israel- Palestine conflict is still in a state of conflict. Hala Alyan has portrayed the initial stage of this conflict as a back-drop of her works. Alyan has also tried to portray the after effects of exodus by giving the minute details of life after the trauma of forced migration. But the conflict has not resolved yet. Many writers and research scholars are still trying to find out the ways to resolve it. Dr. Zamokuhle Mbandlwa in his research article, “Comparative Analysis of the Israel-Palestine: A Path Towards Sustainable Peace,” suggests some ways to resolve this conflict. He asserts that the two-state solution remains the most widely supported framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, proposing the establishment of independent Israeli and Palestinian states living peacefully alongside one another. However, its implementation continues to face significant obstacles, including disputes over borders, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the political status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, and mutual security concerns. Dr. Zamokuhle Mbandlwa further concludes,

Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a deeply entrenched and multifaceted issue. While reaching a sustainable peace agreement is challenging, it is not impossible. A comprehensive approach that addresses the core issues and involves both top-down and bottom-up efforts, as well as consistent international mediation, is the most likely path toward a resolution that respects the rights and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. (4715)

In this way diaspora is a group of people or communities who have been displaced from their original homeland, they share a collective identity and they try to maintain and preserve their traditions, language and heritage. It might be a forced diaspora or a voluntary diaspora and diaspora can be permanent or for a short period. In some cases, the diaspora population sticks to the cultural values and resists the change, whereas in some situations they try to assimilate the new culture. When the diasporic community mixes the culture of their homeland with the culture of the host land, there emerges cultural hybridity. As Bhabha, comments that no culture can be considered pure. In the present scenario, both culture and identity can't be considered fixed or ethnic because both are evolving and changing over time. Sometimes, the children of the diaspora population face a double dilemma of adjusting to family and society because at both places there are different environments and value systems which pose a question regarding their belonging.

The present era is known as the age of migration and in the modern world where all live in a global village. Therefore, transnational connections and movements are overlooking the boundaries and borders. On the other hand, with the advancements in technology and multimedia, it has become possible to revive one's roots as well as to replicate the dominant culture. On the other hand, with cross-border connections and privileges like dual nationality by

the host nations to the diasporic people, their connections with the homelands are strengthening. But there are some situations where people have been forced to leave their homelands and all the ties with the homeland have been snapped forcibly. These communities are scattered all around the world and some of them haven't even been given basic human rights in the country of settlement. So, they keep on nurturing a desire to return to their homeland. The rich literature on the theoretical perspective of diaspora and the changing global scenario has made it impossible to bind diaspora into a single framework or theory.

A typology of diaspora is neither theoretically nor empirically practical in the contemporary period with its dizzying kaleidoscope of displacements, and would fix diasporas in a template that might not have the capacity to account for historical changes in form and parameter. (Peteet 628)

Forced diaspora or the voluntary diaspora, both share a common thing which is the memory of homeland. Some cherish the memories of their homeland and others shiver by the trauma of forceful dispersal. The diaspora is also shaped by the treatment of the diasporic community at the hands of the host nation. If the host nation is liberal and provides an environment of equality in terms of social, economic and political fields the diaspora community starts feeling at home even in a foreign land. On the contrary, if the diasporic community is discriminated against, maltreated, dominated and marginalized then the longing to return gets stronger. The desire to return to the homeland also depends upon the relationship of the homeland with the diasporic community, as, some nations maintain healthy relationships with them and the diasporic people invest time and capital in their host nations, whereas some nations don't permit the migrants to maintain any relation with the homeland. In all the above-mentioned scenarios one more thing will be common along with the memory of the homeland and that is

an adjustment in new geographical, social, economic, political, and cultural scenarios. This adjustment is subjective to each community, nation or person. The people living in the diaspora share their good as well as bad experiences in their writing and the same has brought a surge in the diasporic writings since the twentieth century. Similar is the case of Hala Alyan who is a Palestinian American and the Palestinian diaspora can be traced in her writing.

Palestinian diaspora itself can be classified into several parts firstly, the people who left Palestine voluntarily before the declaration of the independent state of Israel and others who had to leave their homes due to the violence and the terror. The Second classification can be based on place of settlement like whether they have settled in any Arab nation, any European Nation or they are living in a refugee camp or in an occupied area of Israel named West Bank and Gaza Strip. Thirdly, the people who are living in refugee camps further they are living in different types of situations, some camps provide them with some rights whereas the camps like in Lebanon don't give any rights and privileges to them, similar is the case of migrants in other geographical locations regarding the basic human rights and other facilities and citizenship. The fourth classification can be done based on the numbers of migrations as some people directly went to America and got settled there where as some had to live a vagabond-like life of settlement and resettlement in different neighboring places of Palestine. The fifth one is based on the connection with Palestine, it might be a physical or virtual connection, whether the diasporic community is in any touch with Palestine or has been detached from Palestine by assimilation in the host land.

All the above five types can be further divided into two types common Palestinians and Palestinian Elites. Because the situations remained different for both of the groups. At one place the Palestinians are struggling for basic rights on the contrary the Palestinian Elites are enjoying

all the privileges and even having transnational movements with special economic and political rights. Because of so many variations, some scholars don't consider the Palestinians as Diasporic. But, despite some exceptions, the concept of Palestinian Diaspora can't be negated because there are still the people who are nurturing the memory of Palestinian homeland, trying to maintain their Palestinian identity and struggling to return to their homeland. Many world-famous authors like Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, Edward Said, Susan Abulhawa, Suheir Hammad and Sahar Khalifeh have presented the life and emotional state of the Palestinians. The connection with the real, imaginary or created by memories or anecdotes is always there in their writings. As Suheir Hammad Writes, "Home is within me. I carry everyone and everything I am with me wherever I go. Use my history as the road in front of me, the land beneath me. Paths are many, but essence is one and eternal" (11).

The formation of the Palestinian diaspora and its causes have been traced out, with special emphasis on the fact that why the people are insistent upon the return and sovereignty of Palestine. Firstly, the Palestinians' homeland has been occupied and they don't have a country named Palestine. Sometimes the people of Israel have refused to accept even the existence of Palestine, So, Palestinians want their land to belong to. Secondly, most of the Palestinians are living in miserable conditions in the Refugee camps and the camps don't provide them citizenship or other basic rights besides the camps are the hub of so many diasporic people of the same community with the same cause. Third, the members of the diasporic population who were expelled forcefully have gone through such a trauma that they are unable to forget and narrate the same in the form of stories and anecdotes to the coming generations. Fourth, the people who are living a decent life in countries like America and other corners of Europe, are also writing and struggling for the cause of Palestine because their sisters and brothers are kept

devoid of general facilities and rights in refugee camps. Thus, the writings about Palestine connect the authors with Palestine and add to the literature of the Palestinian diaspora.

Chapter 2

Liminality and The Novels of Hala Alyan

The modern world has brought so many perspectives and choices in the life of human beings. There are moments when human beings are struck between two choices or want to travel in two boats at the same time. Such in-between positions lie in the lives of the migrants too, when they can't decide where do they belong whether to their homeland or their host land. Such liminal dilemmas and situations have also been reflected in the novels of Hala Alyan. To study such liminal moments, the theory of liminality has been applied. As liminality also studies the in-between situation of the neophytes going to perform the rituals during the various stages. In the same way theory of liminality will be applied to study the in-between conditions of the characters and situations related to the novels of Hala Alyan.

The concept of liminality has been derived from the word *limen* in the Latin language, which means threshold. French ethnographer and folklorist Van Gennep introduced the idea of liminality to the social sciences with his triadic model of "Rites of Passage." Van Gennep studied the vague, aspects of being in "liminal " stages about rites for the life stages of birth, marriage, puberty etc. He uses the word *limen*, to convey the image of a person standing at the threshold of a new way of viewing the world or situation. The idea of liminality first came into vogue during the 1960s with its English translation and further research on the same was done by Victor Turner. In the present scenario, the term liminality includes a vast array of connotations and theoretical associations that go beyond conventionally related to anthropological discourses on ritual, performance, pilgrimage and cross-societal "Rites of Passage." The idea of liminality is

currently used in a wide range of fields including postcolonial studies, psychology, studies on aging, migration, the diaspora, bureaucracy, identity building etc.

Van Gennep believed that the rites have great significance and that understanding these rites helps to understand ourselves and others too. The rites of passage are performed during various transitional phases and carry a special purpose. According to him these rites of passage in various rituals like that of death and rebirth bring about this regeneration in the social realm. Gennep believed that regeneration was a universal law of life and the universe, requiring periodic renewal of the energy that is present in all systems. Solon T. Kimball in the introduction of the translated version of *The Rites of passage* states, “The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance. In one sense all life is transition, with rhythmic periods of quiescence and heightened activity” (ix). *The Rites of Passage* talks about the three essential stages of the performing rites, “I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, preliminal rites, those executed during the transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world post liminal rites (Gennep, 21).”

Gennep’s theory of Liminality remained oblivious to the world until its English Translation in 1960. Only a small circle of Gennep’s friends knew about his seminal work because of Gennep’s ideological conflicts with Durkheim. Victor Turner’s contribution brought the theory of Liminality into the limelight. The first piece of writing by Turner based on Van Gennep's idea was an article on the Ndembu circumcision rite published in 1962. Turner's early research on ritual and the function of symbols in social practices, which he later expanded upon in "The Forest of Symbols", was published in 1967. It was primarily concerned with the Ndembu tribe of Zambia. According to Turner, liminality is constituted by a circumstance or scenario that involves elements of uncertainty and a dearth of inevitability between what's known or already

happened and its future consequences. Turner's work is extremely significant and it emphasises the creative possibilities of ritual. Victor Turner has expanded his research on Liminality in several works like, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" (1970), "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology" (1974), and "Variations on a Theme of Liminality" (1977).

Liminality is a condition of being "in-between " where people lose their typical identities and the social differences that make them up as they approach a personal or social shift. Van Gennep gave a three-fold structure of the rites which talks about pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. Victor Turner further applies these stages to various rituals of different tribes. But Turner has focused more on the liminal stage of the performing rites. In his seminal work *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner defines the tripartite phases of rites as follows:

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal " period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. (95-96)

Turner expands on Van Gennep's triadic model of the Rite of Passage, which incorporates other cultural occurrences, and serves as the foundation for his work on liminality. Van Gennep's

division of the process of going through various rites into three phases can be simplified as given below:

1. The pre-liminal, wherein the person is metaphorically cut off from the community and his identity.
2. The liminal, which has been regarded as the most important stage by Turner, during which the person is isolated from society and constantly watched over. Those who are going through this phase and facing the obstacles together, form a bond called *communitas*.
3. The post-liminal or reunion stage, during which the person is reincorporated into the community with his new identity. (Andrews and Leopold, 36)

Turner was more concerned about the middle stage called as liminal stage. According to Genep the rituals that are performed during the liminal state, or threshold, give the participants the feeling of in-between spaces and identities. It is a phase in which the participants don't belong to their past condition or future condition. In addition to this structural model, Van Genep proposed four categories of rites that appear to be shared by all cultures and groups. He proposed that various ethnic communities may reproduce and recognise four different forms of social rituals of passage- of status, place, situation and time.

- The passage of individuals from one status to another; initiation rituals that welcome an outsider into the group. This involves being married and participating in initiation rituals that change one's position from outsider to insider.
- Passage from place includes travelling from one location to the other, such as relocating to a new country, city or property.

- Passage from a situation includes moving from one circumstance to another, such as entering college or a new employment, or finishing high school or a university.
- Passage of time contains passing events like birthdays and New Year's festivities.
(Andrews and Leopold, 36).

Van Gennep, concentrated on a process that is essential to every rite of passage and ultimately results in a return and reintegration into the social structure of the indigenous people. Turner focused his research on the time invested in the liminal zones and in-between structures. In "Drama, Fields, and Metaphors" he explains, "What I call liminality, the state of being in between successive considerations . . . is a sphere or domain of action or thought rather than a social modality" (52). Liminality may be considered an opponent to all the predefined structures, at the same time, it is a space of endless possibility where new patterns and structures may emerge. Liminality is a force of change because it starts the process of change by freeing the individuals from the constraints of the previous habit and routine. Liminality does this by enabling individuals to be different from how they have previously been. Turner seems more interested in the antistructure of the liminal stage. Turner writes in *The Ritual Process* that Van Gennep employs two groups of terms to study the threefold procedure in a rite of passage the first group of separation, margin, and reaggregation, is concerned with social order; while the second group of preliminal, liminal, and postliminal, is concerned with space and time. As Turner comments in his seminal work, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*:

When he discusses his first set of terms and applies them to data, van Gennep lays emphasis on . . . the 'structural' aspects of passage. Whereas his use of the second set indicates his basic concern with units of time and space.... Here liminality becomes central. (166)

The liminal condition is frequently compared to death, the womb, being in the wild, being invisible, and other states by Victor Turner. The study on liminality finds that liminal beings must be unquestioningly humble, modest, submissive, and loyal. They submit to the authorities of the entire group they seek membership into, not to another person of greater rank because they are not just of low social status; rather, they have no status at all. Even if only one elder or "ritual master" serves as a symbol for this authority, that person does so on behalf of the whole social structure rather than acting in the capacity of a unique person. In *The Ritual Process* Turner writes, "It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life" (95).

Victor Turner presents a contrast between structure and antistructure. Turner used the term "antistructure" to describe how rites of passage temporarily remove people from their normal social roles and status. This allows them to experiment with different ways of being and relating to others. In the liminal period when the neophytes are segregated from their families and society then all of them are equal to the old societal structure of rich, poor, weak strong, higher social influence or marginalization; all the ranks merge and there is created an antistructure. But the people who are going through the liminal stage all form their own rules and structures. In this way, Turner describes the open-ended and transformative nature of rites of passage which can be used to create new social identities and relationships. It can be said that liminality is anti-structured as well as structured. In the words of Graham St John,

Turner sought to gaze upon interstices that "provide homes for anti-structural visions, thoughts and ultimately behaviours". As outlined in *The Ritual Process* (1969), society is the product of the dialectical historical relationship between

“structure” (society’s status and role differentiation, behavioral norms and cognitive rules) and “antistructure” (those regions of experience in culture—outside, in between, and below structure), between the “fixed” and “floating worlds,” corresponding to “indicative” and “subjunctive moods.” (4)

Turner claims that liminality creates a condition he refers to as *Communitas*. According to Turner, *Communitas* is a society that is mostly devoid of structure, built on relationships of equality and solidarity, and that is in opposition to the conventional social structure. At first, Turner discussed “*Communitas*,” in “*The Rites of Passage*” in relation to the Ndembu tribe, to describe the merging of individuals in the process of realizing one's boundaries. The significance of *communitas* is shown through the dismantling of this established order. Turner claims that the *communitas* is the pinnacle of a culture. The existing social order is shattered by liminality and *communitas*, as it is a group of those people who are going to perform a ritual, who have been excluded from the rest of the society for a particular time, for performing certain rituals. During a rite of passage, attachments are built among the initiates which are of a different caliber and depth from the relationships established within a structured community. In *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner defines *communitas* in the following words:

What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a "moment in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (96)

This type of universal human bonding which Turner talks about can only occur during the "anti-structure" of the liminal phase. Communitas in the words of K.A. Shinde is a "transitory phase. . . people from different social structures may eliminate outward signs of rank and division and transcend their differences" (337). Turner, calls liminality a period of power imbalance because liminality evolves to "Communitas", a community that is both structured and anti-structured. In this way, communitas is a phase that splits through the interspace in structure and challenges the existing social order and standards. Liminality lacks polarities and fixities, through a situation of statelessness, which prohibits walls and binaries from forming. Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure*, calls Liminality or Liminal People ambiguous because it is an in-between stage:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (95)

In the same book we come to know that, in Van Gennep's terms, the margin and the liminal depict the same stage with a little difference. The word marginal has recently come to common usage as an adjective to describe those who lack rank or authority. As liminality and marginality are so closely related, some theorists combine the two terms. Turner does the same but he establishes a technical differentiation by designating the changing element in the structure's interstices as liminal, whereas the marginal works are located at the structural

boundary (128). Similarly, James A Hall depicts the dual presence of both margin and liminal forces in human beings, while discussing the Liminality and Transitional Phenomena,

Unlike marginal qualities, which are visible but not emphasized from the view of the stable self- image, the liminal identity is one that involves a shift from the usual sense of self toward an identity that is known to be different from the persona . . . and actually moves . . . toward a more comprehensive dominant self- image than the one transiently abandoned in the liminal state. (21)

The term "liminoid" was created by Turner to characterise the liminal encounters of individuals who reside in complicated cultures, while he preserved the term "liminal" to define the change of phases in small, steady communities. A liminoid experience possesses liminal experience features but is optional and does not resolve a personal crisis. Rock climbing or visiting a concert will be called a liminoid experience whereas, attending a convocation and receiving a degree is a liminal phenomenon. In Turner's later work, the terms liminal and liminality acquired more intricate meanings.

Liminal space is the 'in-between' space, of cultural activity in which meaning is produced. The literal meaning of "threshold" will help in the clarity of the concept of liminal space. It is the threshold of the door that must be crossed when entering the house. It marks the point where the public or outer world ends and the private and inner world begins. More generally, it indicates a place, line, or boundary where a transition from one space to another may occur. Such spatial structures have a great impact on social interactions. Relationships and social status are negotiated at thresholds. One is rejected by the other side or welcomed by the other side. The word "threshold" conjures up images of entry and exit, transition, transition, and change. It marks the point at which decisions and choices must be made to move forward. Turner

studies Liminality not only concerning anthropology, rather he traced its social and magico-religious situations too. As mentioned in *The Rites of Passage* by Arnold van Gennep,

Whoever passes from one [zone] to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. It is this situation which I have designated a transition, and one of the purposes of this book is to demonstrate that this symbolic and spatial area of transition may be found in more or less pronounced form in all of the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social and magico-religious position to another. (18)

In its finest form, liminality is a spatial concept. It is by no means a coincidence that Van Gennep began his research of ritual passages with a complete chapter on "The Territorial passage". Van Gennep understood that territorial border areas, border lines, thresholds, or portals were structurally equivalent to the transitional stage of a ritual passage. The development of space and geography corresponds to the ritual inscription of a cultural passage. Van Gennep even suggested that perhaps crossing a threshold physically came before some rituals that mark a symbolic or "spiritual" passage. As Bjørn Thomassen remarks,

It should be said very explicitly that van Gennep's work represents a starting point for theorizing space, but also more concretely still, for conceptualizing borders and boundaries... he discussed both concrete thresholds such as portals or doorways, but he also included demarcations of tribal societies, villages and towns, and neutral zones between countries. (91)

In *Liminality and the Modern Living Through the In-Between* Bjørn Thomassen talks about the types of liminality. About subjecthood, liminality can be divided into three types- single individual, social groups and related to whole societies. He further talks about three temporal dimensions of liminality related to moment, periods and epoch. As he states, "Single moments, longer periods, or even whole epochs can be considered liminal. Liminality can also be applied to both single individuals and to larger groups (cohorts or villages), or whole societies, and arguably even entire civilizations" (89). It needs to be clarified that these analytical divisions are quite arbitrary. There is no clear way to discern between "moments" and "periods," and the dimensions mentioned could potentially be seen in continuity. The writer further studies the liminality of social progress in large-scale settings and natural disasters too.

Ritual Passages and Narrative Structures by Elsbree Langdon analyses the similarities between ritual sequences and narrative structures. The main ideas of this study are how rites of passage, especially in their liminal stage, connect with narrative forms and the benefits of these interactions for critical theory and analysis. The Book offers fresh viewpoints for comprehending the connections between ritual and tale, as well as between art and life, by drawing on recent anthropological and other social-scientific research. He further comments that Liminality is an agent of change as "both initiates and becomes are the process of change" (20). Langdon finds liminality as the dominant subject of literature used as an interpretative strategy, "This liminality. . . is the condition of exile and extinction which has become a dominant subject in many literatures during the last hundred years" (5).

The concept of liminality assists in comprehending the essence of transformative occurrences like war, revolution, or severe economic distress. In the words of Szakolczai "Liminality is among the most important conceptual tools that are at once innovative and deeply

based on the most important historical and anthropological traditions of mankind” (167). In the same way as a major sickness or a new emotional connection, impacts the lives of all individuals involved. The concept of "liminality" enables us to comprehend how some significant events can actually and irrevocably change the modes of being of those involved. The intensity and amount of the transformation as well as the remnants of prior identities that have survived will determine the direction and degree of the change, among other things:

This helps to understand the nature of transformative events. A transformative event, as a technical term for sociological analysis, can be defined as something that happens in real life, whether for an individual, a group, or an entire civilization, that suddenly questions and even cancels previously taken-for-granted certainties, thus forcing people swept away by this storm to reflect upon their experiences, even their entire life, potentially changing not only their conduct of life but their identity. (Szakolczai, 158)

The theory of liminality has been studied in relation to international relations by Maria Malksoo, a senior researcher in international relations studies. There is significant potential for the use of liminality in a variety of international relations issues, from the study of the key international relations concepts of power, security, and sovereignty to the analysis of the operative relationship. It helps in the study of state formation, recognition, war and political violence, along with the structural transformation of the international system, and extraordinary politics during times of transition. Political anthropology's basic beliefs provide the logic of transfer for using the idea of liminality not only in the study of individual and small-scale communal human experiences but also in the analysis of large-scale societal systems. Because it does not emphasise the conflict between the state and the individual subject, nor does it

distinguish between the domestic and foreign realms, or the political and the social spheres. She states, “As a threshold situation, liminality is also a vital moment of creativity, a potential platform for renewing the societal make-up” (481).

The concept of the threshold concept in relation to literature has been studied by Mary Ann Caws. She writes, “The present awareness of liminality and its applications is of far reach. This broad threshold includes at once the multiple notions of border, hinge, and articulation” (15). Michele H. Richman discusses liminality in her research article “Introduction to the *College de Sociologie*: Post-structuralism Before Its Time?” She studies the concept of liminality in relation with the educational institute. According to her Victor Turner, “Describes transitional states termed liminality or *communitas*, when a group transgresses institutional norms and is temporarily stripped of its structural, defining attributes. . .” (88-89).

In the present scenario, liminality has been attributed to multiple meanings and theoretical frameworks beyond anthropology, performances, and rituals; as Les Roberts observes, “Liminal phenomena, either directly or obliquely, have remained an important underpinning to critical interventions in areas straddling concerns with space, culture, memory and landscape” (33). It has been studied about space and time too. Any border crossing, national boundary, sea-shore or border zone can be considered a liminal space. Due to war, natural disasters and colonialism in the postmodernist scenario, people have home nowhere as well as everywhere, so all those can be considered living in a liminal space.

The idea that these and other liminal Zones are anti essentialist spaces where identities are contingent, malleable and fluid, is one that also underpins Bhabha’s concept of ‘third space’, conceived of as a cultural space where hybrid identities

are negotiated and forged, often in resistance to hegemonic power structures.

(Roberts, 41)

Homi Bhabha adapted liminality into the postcolonial experience of identity creation in his seminal work *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha emphasised Turner's notion of the liminal or marge phase as essential to the formation of a new entity and lauded liminality as a creative area where differences are encountered and hybridity results. The study of the theory of liminality has got special attention in post-colonial studies about cultural hybridity. As in the post-colonial scenario, people have moved from one location to another. Some of them have successfully assimilated the new cultures and transformed themselves, but on the other hand, some are unable to do so and are now stuck in a state of in-betweenness. Ashcroft et al. associate liminality to the postcolonial idea as follows in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*,

The significance of the liminal for post-colonial theory is precisely its usefulness in describing an "in-between" space in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for individual or collective self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continuous process of movement and interchange between different states. (130)

Homi Bhabha uses liminality as a discursive and subversive state of in-betweenness and ambiguity, which is essential for the understanding of liminal existence. In his seminal work "The Location of Culture" Bhabha emphasises the importance of border locations and the threshold setting together with hybridity. Liminal theory is used for the study of postcolonial research because it facilitates the understanding of the transcultural space between shifts in space and culture. According to Homi. K. Bhabha, liminality is an elusive and ambiguous term that exists only temporarily. Bhabha put a lot of stress on important practices and liminal discourses.

It includes a few geographical boundaries, such as the ocean, seashore borders, and markets, among others. As a critic says, “Bhabha, in terms of liminality, elaborates on cultural hybridity, his main contribution to the postcolonial study. Bhabha used liminality in a way to indicate an in-between space or territory in which cultures mix and interact to create new hybrid forms” (Omidvar 3).

The concept of the third space develops into a venue for a transcultural debate where the distinctions between East and West or North and South are blurred to create fresh and ever-changing subjectivities. In this way, the conflict between two or more civilizations led Bhabha towards the concept of third space which is perceived by him as a liminal space. The third space proves a fertile ground for new and creative ideas by leaving the old conventional ideas far behind. Bhabha explains the concept in *The Location of Culture*, as follows:

The transnational dimension of cultural transformation—migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation...makes the process of cultural translational complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, unsettling advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition (Bhabha 247).

Echoing a similar sense of “homelessness” with its creative potential, *Imaginary Homeland* reflects Salman Rushdie’s perspective:

“Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, we fall between two stools, but however ambiguous and

shifting the ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy (Rushdie 15).”

Therefore, it is abundantly obvious that the concept of liminality, which was borrowed from *Rites of Passage* by Van Gennep used for marriage, puberty, and other coming-of-age rituals, has come to represent the boundary or threshold existence of diasporic communities. Thus, "liminal existences" is utilised to convey the in-between and changing identities of the migrated characters in the diaspora while keeping in mind Bhabha's concept of "third space." The third space is both a place of ongoing conflict and negotiation. In developing a new identity for themselves, the research will seek to situate immigrant's experiences in the diaspora as a "third space."

The works of Palestinian American author Hala Alyan also depict the transnational movement of her characters due to war and other reasons. The characters of her works are migrants or the diasporic community living in the third space. The characters are found living at liminal places which are neither their homes nor alien to them. They are liminal beings struck between their memories of their homelands and the influences of their present environment. The traumas of migration have influenced them terribly and the flashbacks of those traumatic memories in contrast with the happy life in the foreign land again put them in a liminal situation. As Hala Alyan talks about her own liminal identity in, *I'll Tell You When I'm Home: A Memoir*,

I am a Palestinian American. My father was born in Palestine. My mother was born in Kuwait with Lebanese citizenship. My grandmother was Syrian. I spent my Childhood between the United States and the Arab World. I returned to this country for graduate school and fell in love: with the city, with a man. I thought I

would go back, but it never seemed like the right time. Then it became the less possible. (19-20)

The novels of Hala Alyan will be analysed in light of the theory of liminality. The liminality will be analysed in terms of preliminal, liminal and post-liminal stages along with the passage- of status, place, situation and time in relation to various characters and their situations. Attempts will be made to trace the other key terms associated with liminality like liminod, structure and antistructure, communitas, liminal space and permanent liminality, in the two novels of Hala Alyan entitled *Salt Houses* and *The Arsonist's City*.

The theory of liminality should not be not be mistaken as a universal explanation of migration, trauma and identity crisis. The theory only studies the three transformative stages where the liminal or the in-between condition is the most crucial one. Some writers take the exilic conditions or migration in a positive way too. As Mahmood Darwish shares his views about exile in an interview with Hasona Mosabhi where he expresses that homeland should not be viewed simply as the opposite of exile, as the connection between the two is far more intricate. He believes that exile can become a meaningful source of growth, inspiration, and artistic expression rather than merely a condition of loss. Instead, exile can enrich a poet's perspective and deepen their understanding of identity and existence. As Darwish comments,

Exile is not all black or grey, because I matured in this exile, and wrote my most important works in it. And if we were to go deeper into the subject, we can say that exile is the laboratory of experience. It is also a poet's destiny in his ongoing dialogue with the Other, and between the inner and the outer. The only thing we must guard against is that exile should not become a habit, but rather a way of

looking at human existence and the isolation of beings in this existence.

Therefore, no homeland can cancel exile, and no exile can cancel the homeland.

Darwish further explains that exile should not become a permanent state of mind or an accepted routine; instead, it should be understood as a perspective through which one reflects on human existence and the inherent loneliness of life. Consequently, homeland and exile are inseparable experiences, as neither can completely erase or replace the other. Palestinians Born in Exile Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland by Julianne Hammer also stresses the idea that

Migration can be an enriching experience that introduces new ideas and concepts into a person's world view and communal identities, opening up horizons and extending the borders of knowledge. At the same time, it can lead to confrontation with others because of ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. It can also lead to are thinking of ethnicity and therefore an interest in preserving this difference that creates boundaries and defines "otherness." (1)

For some migrants, the process of migration involves crossing cultural boundaries and adapting to life between two different worlds. Migration contributes to increasingly complex societies, where many individuals live outside the nation to which they originally belong. This reality has intensified the search for personal roots and the preservation of family heritage and cultural traditions. However, migration is rarely driven solely by a wish for personal growth or cultural exploration. More often, it results from circumstances beyond an individual's control. Various social, political, and economic pressures compel people or families to leave their homes, while forced displacement caused by war, genocide, political persecution, or famine represents a particularly severe and distinct form of migration.

Hala Alyan's debut Novel *Salt Houses* depicts the displacement of Palestinians from one place to another. She has portrayed the life story of a family and the continuous migration of its four generations to various parts of the world. Their settlement, resettlement, loss and liminal dilemmas will be studied in detail. In *Salt Houses*, the Yacoub family of Salma and Hassan along with their three children named Widad, Mustafa and Alia migrated to Nablus in 1948. Hala Alyan uses the same incidents as a backdrop of her novel which have been mentioned by Edward W. Said in his book *After the last Sky*, "By the mid-spring of 1948 my extended family in its entirety had departed, evicted from Palestine along with almost a million other Palestinians. This was the nakba, or catastrophe, which heralded the destruction of our society and our dispossessions as people: it coincided exactly with the establishment of the state of Israel" (vii). In *Salt Houses* Salma opens the story by reading the coffee cup before her youngest daughter Alia's wedding. She does not want to read it for her daughter but Alia convinces her. Salma quickly regrets the choice because the results don't match the expectations a mother has for her daughter. Salma can trace an unstable life for her daughter but she hides the truth from her. Once again, the war of 1967 forced the Yacoub family out of Nablus, and they had to relocate once again within nineteen years. Salma's son Mustafa is imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Salma relocates to Jordan. Alia married off to Atef and moved to Kuwait where her elder sister Widad was married off.

Alia and Atef try to adjust with great difficulty in Jordan with the baggage of the past and hardships of the present. They give birth to three children Riham, Karam, and Souad who are also destined to relocate. Beginning with the start of the Gulf War, Alia's family moves to Jordan. Riham is married to a Jordanian doctor named Latif. Karam lives in the United States and marries a different exiled Iraqi Kurdish woman named Budur. After marrying Elie, Souad settled in Paris and had two children, Manar and Zain. Souad then migrates to the US with her kids

following her divorce. The Yacoub's family's story serves as a testament to the hardships faced by Palestinians and their life full of displacements, homelessness and travel. Alyan recalls the difficult past, as a form of expression for the Palestinian sufferings. Throughout, the novel Atef hides a secret from his wife Alia that it was he who did not let his brother Mustafa run from Nablus and later on he was killed in prison. He shares everything with his friend Mustafa even after he dies in the form of some secret letters addressed to dead Mustafa. The letters are later read by his granddaughter who visits the places mentioned in the letters to relocate her roots. Whereas, Ali suffers from Alzheimer's and remains lost in memories of her youthful stay at Nablus and the pleasant memories of her deceased brother Mustafa. But at the end of the story, Souad's daughter Manar visits Palestine and physically feels the place where her grandparents belonged to.

The chapters of this novel are given the names of various characters who are the children and grandchildren of Salma and Hussam. The title of the first chapter is "Salma" and it depicts the recent migration of her family from Jaffa to Nablus in March. It is difficult for all of them to settle in a new place the diasporic memories of the old home haunt their minds, being a small child Alia cries for the things she can't get at Nablus, "She asks for the licorice sticks the grocer used to give her, for the dolls in her old bedroom. She cried at the thunderous sound of the dolls in her old bedroom. She cried at the thunderous sound of automobiles snaking through the Nablus marketplace." But, Hussam is the worst hit by this displacement,

Their father in Nablus was a transformed creature, cheerless and short-tempered. He no longer made growling sounds when he was hungry, mimicking a lion or bear until they giggled. He no longer asked them to stand straight in front of him and recite Hafiz Ibrahim's poetry, adopting a mock sternness when they faltered.

When he spoke with Widad or Mustafa, he seemed to be unfocused. Every evening, he listened to the radio raptly. (6)

The behaviour of Hussam depicts the liminal elements as he has got torn between two places. He is physically living in Nablus but the memories of Jaffa still haunt his mind and he is unable to cope with it. He was not willing to leave Jaffa but the family was forced to leave. All this has turned him into a transformed being. The loss is unbearable for him and he dies in a liminal state at a young age.

The Jaffa-born children are facing a liminal dilemma at Nablus. It is found in the first chapter that Alia refuses to veil her face whereas her parents are devoted Muslims. Such a dilemma has also been depicted in the second chapter entitled Mustafa where it is depicted that Mustafa doesn't share the faith in God which can be found in his parents. This phase can be regarded as the liminal phase of his personality. Because, later under the influence of Imam Bakri, the same Mustafa becomes a leader of a group that is fighting for the rights of the Palestinians and the same person who was not sure of his religious faith sacrifices his life for a purpose. As Hala Alyan describes the liminal phase of his religious faith,

Not that kind of faith, though Mustafa has a flighty belief in Allah.... when Imam Bakri addresses the men, his arms moving like an orchestra conductor's, when he talks about Allah's greatness and the coming war and the righteousness of land, Mustafa's spine tingles at only one word: Palestine... (31)

The growing trouble in Nablus and the expulsion of the migrants has been portrayed in the next chapter entitled "Alia". The scenario where Alia and Atef take shelter in Kuwait and Mustafa gets killed in the political strife. Strangely, Alia's mother Salma thinks that Jaffa is her

true home where as Alia misses her home at Nablus during her stay in Kuwait because she has spent her childhood over there. She can't feel at home in Kuwait although she has been residing with her sister and husband. She wants to live in Amman where her mother and other relatives live. On the other hand, her husband Atef doesn't want to go to Amman as he thinks that looking at the same people who used to live together at Nablus will revive his traumatic memories. In this way Alia's stay in Kuwait is liminal she is in a 'betwixt and in between' situation, where she is vacillating between the childhood memories of Nablus and dreaming of a future life in Amman not accepting her present life in Kuwait. As Alia contemplates,

Instead of staying in Kuwait's wasteland, the endless afternoons of television and heat, let them go to Amman, the coffee shops and vendors hawking fruit, neighborhoods filled with old friends. Yes, everyone was distraught, mourning the houses and cities they'd left behind, the men beneath the soil. Shouldn't they mourn together? Palestine has vanished for them—this knowledge crept up on Alia slowly, a new death every morning: Mustafa gone, Nablus gone—but they can find the ashes in Amman, collect them to build another life. (59 -60)

The chapter entitled "Riham" talks about Alia's elder daughter Riham who feels herself out of place when she can't find herself slim and attractive like her sister and other cousins, she even feels ashamed in the swimsuit. But when she is about to die by drowning and gets saved then she embraces the faith of her grandmother Salma, "Her grandmother gives her a scarf to knot around her head, and a long robe, white with red embroidery. Although it's too large, the sleeves past her fingers, the hem tripping her, Riham always feels strangely beautiful following her grandmother up the stairs, into the suddenly cool, dark entrance" (119). It's unique that years ago Alia refused to veil her face but even in modern times, her daughter wears a scarf on her

head to show her faith. Alia's middle child Karam follows his parents and the youngest daughter Souad is a rebel. Alia faces certain challenges by carrying the memories of the past while raising the children in a foreign land. With time Alia too starts accepting life in Kuwait and develops a taste for English culture. As depicted in the text,

THE MUSIC SHOW ends and a sitcom begins, some American program with a family, a husband and wife laughingly arguing. There are Arabic subtitles below, but Alia likes to listen to the English. Her English is decent from years of listening to the children talk but especially strong on the esoteric—gorgeous, mind-blowing, bungalow.... Atef squints at the television. “An American sitcom? That’s what we’ve come to?” He laughs fondly. “*Ya ajnabiyeh.*” A phrase Alia’s mother used for the children when they taught her English and French words during the summer. You foreigner. (138)

Alia’s acceptance of life in Kuwait might be termed as permanent liminality where she has accepted the change and got accustomed to the new ways of a hybrid lifestyle.

In the Chapter entitled “Souad,” the life of Alia’s youngest daughter Souad in France is depicted. Souad’s love for studies, her falling in love with Mimi and meanwhile the growing Tension in Kuwait. Souad the most impulsive of all three siblings goes through trauma when she finds that her birthplace is being bombarded, her parents are leaving that place forever and she won’t be able to visit her childhood place anymore. The people of Arabic origin sit together at a café and discuss the war and the whole scenario:

THEY MET AT the Shuja’a café in Kuwait a year ago. It was a space near the university where the intellectuals went to smoke cigarettes and talk about the war

in Beirut and the Intifada. People sat around circular tables and drank Turkish coffee. It was a favored spot for those who considered themselves Communists, the young men wearing all black. Souad loved it... In the Shuja'a café, she felt like a version of herself that was nearly complete, someone whom others would want. (167)

The Suja café is the best example of a liminoid as in a liminoid scenario people get experiences similar to liminality but it is for a short time and a person doesn't need to transform after the liminoid experience. Similarly, the Suja café is a hub of intellectuals and migrants where they discuss art and other issues about their identity, homeland, and the turmoil around the world. The following chapter with the title "Riham" discusses the life of Alia and Atef's old age when they live in a home near Riham's. She is the favorite of her parents and her father shares her innermost feelings even the complaints of her mother with her. Although she is the favorite daughter of her parents, she can't share the kinship her sister and brother share. She can't even understand most of their talks and their transnational vocabulary and experiences. She faces a liminal dilemma, being their sister, she knows them but at the same time, they seem foreigner to her. As, Hala Alyan writes,

Listening to conversation between those two—living minutes apart in Boston, sharing their lives and children—is like listening to a foreign language. When they attempt to include Riham—explaining their work or the city, with its college bars and bookstores—it feels wooden, forced, like they're trying to help her understand something she simply cannot. (183)

The hollow life of Souad in Boston after Elie's separation from her has been portrayed in the chapter with the title "Souad." Souad loves Elie and at the same time, she hates him. Sometimes, she is so immersed in the grieving that she becomes oblivious that she has two children also to look after. While passing through such a dilemma, she figures out that she wants to go home. This is the fifth generation of Salma's family the grandchildren of Alia from Souad are facing the same liminal situation by their ancestors because they don't know what is home for their mother because for them Boston is their home:

Beirut called to her. She wanted somewhere new. She wanted to go home, she told Zain and Manar, though Manar just stared at her and said flatly, What home.

Home as in somewhere familiar, somewhere people look like us, talk like us, where you guys can learn Arabic and be near your grandparents and never come home asking what raghead means. (207)

It can be termed as liminal dilemma of Souad's personality when after living in France and Boston, she craves for a home and a place to belong to. She is shattered to know that her homeland and childhood home is no longer hers. Finally, she rediscovers her identity and tries to find home in the people she can associate herself with.

Payal Pal's research paper, "Nostalgia, identity, and homeland: Reading the narratives of the diaspora in Susan Abulhawa's fiction," depicts triple exile of Mahmoud from novel, *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, "The first on his family's expulsion from their ancestral village, Beit Daras; the second in America, on being separated from his family members who remain in the camps in Gaza; and the third when he discovers his son's abhorrence of his Palestinian identity" (55). Similarly in *Salt Houses* depicts the multiple migrations of Alia, her parents and

further her children. The article examines *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* to explore how Palestinian Arabs preserve their cultural identity despite the loss of their homeland. It highlights that cultural traditions serve as a means of resisting the deep emotional pain of displacement, exile, and dispossession. The novels portray the persistent sense of homelessness experienced by dispersed Palestinians, often placing them in a state of liminality and in-betweenness. The study further contends that, although exile creates uncertainty and insecurity, it has become an integral part of the Palestinian collective consciousness, strengthening their aspiration for self-determination and the reclaiming of their national identity.

The racial differences and discrimination faced by the children of both siblings Souad and Karam named Linah, Zain and Manar have been elaborated in The chapter “Linah.” They live in Beirut during the summer in their apartments but the children of ethnic Lebanese people don’t like them:

They all come from elsewhere. Alex’s father is Jordanian, Tony’s is Swedish, and Camille’s mother is British. They are all mishmashed and mixed up, which and Camille’s mother is British. They are all mishmashed and mixed up, which draws them together...

“You’re not even Lebanese.” Marie’s voice rung out loud and sharp, several patrons in the store turning to stare.

Taken aback, Linah stammered through an answer. “W-we have an apartment here, we come every summer—”

The other girl's mouth twisted meanly. "You think that matters? With your weird accent in Arabic." A couple of girls behind her tittered. "You think your people deserve to be here? (230)

The children in Beirut consider themselves Palestinians where the children have never heard that name at their home, they have just heard the names of the villages where their ancestors used to live. They are born and brought up in America but are still discriminated against because of their race and family background. Here the whole existence of these children becomes liminal. An example of liminal space can be found in the chapter "Atef". By old age, Alia becomes a patient of Alzheimer and she starts forgetting her children and grandchildren she lives in a liminal world of her past days in Nablus and reimagines her wedding with Atef. When she falls seriously ill and is taken to the hospital then the description of the hospital is given by Karam who assumes it as a place of uncertainty. As people may get healed or die at the same place. Karam describes the place as,

THE SPECIALTY CLINIC is attractively built, spare and white and sunny. They register in the atrium and Atef thinks about the people who come to these offices and hear horrible news, of brain tumors and cancer, then have to walk back out into the atrium. The beauty of the space, he thinks, must be devastating. As for the rest of the patients—merely brushing a close call, nothing but migraines, clean blood tests—they must be dazed with relief, suddenly grateful for every dust mote. (255)

In the last chapter of the novel with the title "Manr," the daughter of Souad and Elie visits Jaffa. She has read and brought with her the letters of her grandfather Atef which had been addressed to the dead Mustafa. She visits the places mentioned in those letters and accomplishes

the wish to feel the place her ancestors belonged to. But there is a difference between the actual place and the place mentioned in the letters and the place she has imagined in her mind on the basis of the anecdotes heard from her parents. She has always longed for Palestine but now she visits the place:

These places she has read about, circles on a map, suddenly emerge, smelling of fruit and car exhaust. I'm in Ramallah, she marvels to herself. This is Haifa. Her pang for Palestine had always been an amorphous thing. It was a hat rack for all her discontent. But suddenly Palestine is real. It is filled with people who have her hair and voice; people live here, she realizes stupidly. (282)

The Visit to Palestine by Manar can be called a post-liminal stage where her liminal questions related to her identity get answers and she re-aggregates with her society. But the Palestine mentioned in the letters becomes a liminal place because now it is no longer the same Palestine, it has changed a lot yet the same too. But after going there she realizes that now she belongs to the place where she lives as there is no place for her in Palestine.

Similarly in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* Amal experiences repeated episodes of grief, depression, and emotional turmoil throughout her life. She marries a Palestinian doctor dies in a bomb explosion while working in a refugee camp in the Middle East. Although she gradually comes to terms with her losses and gives birth to her daughter, Sara, Amal continues to struggle with a profound sense of liminality, feeling that she truly belongs nowhere. During moments of reflection, however, her memories become a source of strength and wonder. Her personal recollections merge with the shared memories of the Palestinian community, shaping her identity through a collective longing for the lost homeland of Palestine.

I have always found it difficult not to be moved by Jerusalem, even when I hated it.... It sparks an inherent sense of familiarity in me – that doubtless, irrefutable Palestinian certainty that I belong to this land. It possesses me, no matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. (140)

In *The Arsonists' City*, the story of the Lebanese Nasr family is portrayed. Idris is a heart surgeon who lives in California, he plans to sell his old house in Beirut, which he and his sister Sara inherited from their late father, Issa Nasr. About forty years ago, Idris fell in love with Mazna, a talented Damascene actress who had previously made appearances in several Shakespearean plays. In the summer of 1978, Idris introduces Mazna to Zakaria, his childhood friend. Zakaria's mother Hayat, has spent her entire life working as a servant at the Nasr's house. Zakaria is a Palestinian refugee who lives in camps in Lebanon and gets nostalgic about Palestine, "His mother hates the camps, hates Beirut, all of Lebanon, hates their neighbors, the aunties with their tattling and boring lives, always reminding her children, *We used to have gardens in Palestine, trees that belonged to us*" (VIII). The summer is spent by Idris, Zakaria, and Mazna casually taking pictures and filming their travels. Zakaria and Mazna fell in love with each other, and the two had a sexual encounter in the bakery where Zakaria works. Idris only gets a hint of Zakaria's attachment with Mazna and questions him:

"You know what you did," Idris had finally said. "I trusted you. I've always trusted you." Zakaria had fallen silent at that, "He felt guilty and yet also unrepentant— how to apologize for the only truly good thing that'd ever happened to him? —which Idris had sniffed out like a dog. He'd called him a traitor." (IX)

These lines depict the liminal state of Zakaria's mind, he is both guilty and in love with the incident of lovemaking with Mazna. After questioning by Idris, Zakaria leaves the house feeling humiliated and goes back to the refugee camp where he resides with his mother and three younger sisters. Following a week, Zakaria is murdered by a militant group of Phalangists due to his alleged involvement in Phalangist militiaman's murder. Idris persuades Mazna to get married to him and flee to the US with her by luring her with the words that Mazna could continue her acting career in the U.S. and he could pursue his job as a surgeon. But both of them live a liminal life over there because none of them can forget their memories of homeland and Zakaria, for Idris he was a brother-like childhood friend and for Mazna, he was her first love.

The migration of Mazna and Idris to the United States may be termed a passage of place in the terminology of the theory of liminality. As the person going through the liminal experience is described as submissive and taking the commands of the authorized person in the same way, Mazna feels powerless in America and makes fruitless attempts to break down Hollywood's walls. Alyan depicts the everyday hardships and challenges faced by Arab migrants in Western countries by the characters of Idris and Mazna. Mazna, who was the talented actress and star attraction had to face racial discrimination even once she was sexually exploited by a director. When finally, she is about to get selected for a role, her husband denies to the producer on the phone because she is pregnant for the third time, whereas, she has already aborted the child without talking about it to Idris. She was considered a fluent artist in Syria but in the U.S.A she had to face communication issues,

At least shopping day gives her some purpose, but there is always something uncomfortable. On the crosstown bus, the driver gets impatient with her counting out coins. Another shopper asks her something, but she speaks too quickly and

when Mazna doesn't say anything in return, the woman giving her a concerned look. In school she was one of the best in English class, but hers is an English of movies and theater, not everyday conversation. She freezes when a cashier says, have a good one. (311)

America can also be termed as a liminal space for Idris and Mazna and adjustment in a new country is not easy. In the beginning, they face economic challenges too. Mazna who dreams of becoming an actress manages the household and tries to save every penny so that they can manage up to the end of the month. Idris gets occupied in his studies and medical practice but Mazna feels out of place. She observes the surroundings and befriends the other Arab people who have settled in America. Mazna's description of Arab migrants' connection with each other and their moving together can be compared to a *communitas*, as a *communitas* is a group of those people who are going through transition, in the same way all the Arab migrants on American soil are going through some transition and struggle to adjust. All of them have been migrated to their homeland and going through the process of transition from one value system to another. As Mazna describes:

The Arabs—she knows she shouldn't think of them this way, but she can't help it, they always move in a group, taking up sidewalks and stores, the women with their teased hair and overdone eyes pulling out snacks for their screaming children—were already friends with one another when Mazna met them; it was like getting ten for the price of one. She is friendly with them. They go to parks together, drove once to the zoo in San Diego. Arabs find each other, she's learned. Maybe all people do. They speak different dialects of Arabic, come from wildly

different families back home, but here it doesn't matter. America is the great equalizer. (341)

After futile attempts to join the film industry, Mazna finally settles down to be a stay-at-home mother, raising her three kids, Ava, Mimi (Marwan), and Naj. She also starts doing a part-time job of looking after the plants in a greenhouse. Although Mazna got settled in America, she couldn't feel at home in that country for a long time even after the birth of her three children on American soil. Many times, she wished to return to her home, but she knew the poor condition of her parents and the war-like situations in Syria and Lebanon, it seemed as if she had been struck with a permanent liminality. Mazna's indifference towards life in America has been mentioned in the childhood memory of Mimi, where it's hinted that Idris didn't want Mazna to work anymore,

His mother at the greenhouse, she worked at despite his father's protests. *Mazna we're not immigrant students anymore. I make good salary. We live in good house.*

You don't have to work there. He 'd gone on like that for years until Mazna finally replied.

I was never a student here. I will always be an immigrant. His father never mentioned that again. (66)

Later on, Mazna's younger children Mimi and Naj become singers, and Ava starts working as a biologist when she grows up. All three children of Mazna fought their own battles at an emotional level and about inter-personal relationships with their respective partners. Ava is happily married, and she has children too but due to the short-term love affair with her husband, she is facing trust issues. Ava and Mimi live in America but Naj settles in Lebanon to study at the

American University of Beirut where she discovers her lesbian inclinations. Mazna gets annoyed with Naj's decision because she doesn't want to send her child to a war zone. Mimi is in a live-in relationship with Harper and is not sure about his commitment to his partner. Besides he works in a restaurant to earn his livelihood and spares some time for a musical band to nurture his passion. His indecisiveness and changing interests can be located in his liminal physical appearance as a boy he wears some girlish makeup and likes to keep long hair,

MIMI STILL WEARS the eyeliner, although he has dispensed with the torn jeans, the leather wrap bracelet, even the shaggy Cobain hair. The last was the most difficult to give up... Your hair is the antithesis of the restaurant's ethos, she often said in that faux-Southern accent of hers—Cordelia, who was raised on a cattle ranch in Alpine, Texas, but liked to ape socialite Savannah. (34)

Naj is a lesbian, and the fact is known only to her brother. Her queer orientation in itself makes her a liminal being. She can't forget her college friend Fee and indulges in sexual relationships with multiple girls. There is a strange thing that she has a very good bond with a boy named Jo, with whom she shares her band. People consider them a couple, even though they got clicked naked together in a bathtub for the cover photo of a song. But despite their too much love, understanding and quality time spent with each other, Naj can't indulge in any physical relationship with Jo even with deliberate efforts. Naj has accepted her queer identity and she wants to show it to her audience too, but again the liminal situation arises when she can't disclose her real identity to the world before her parents:

The truth is that Naj had a fantasy when the band first started of being some sort of lesbian vanguard of the Arab world, a queer rock star, a lighthouse for the gay kiddos. But the closer she got to it, the more she shrank from the prospect. She

couldn't tell her fans before she told her parents. Her mother and father were liberal enough, accepted that America was different, but some things couldn't be helped. (87)

Naj's friend Fee had to migrate from Syria to Lebanon due to the war. Fee used to work in a bank but now she has turned into an artist. Her art exhibition creates a liminoid experience because under every painting there are some stories. One story tells about the story of the queen of Syria who fled to Beirut to save herself during the war. Sometimes she tries to procure old clothes of Syrian women and paint her models in those clothes to give them an original touch. She even x-rays the flowers and other objects that belong to her homeland and displays them in her art exhibitions. In this way by different ways, she remembers her homeland and tries to keep its memories alive. The liminoid experience faced by Naj in the art gallery states, "The art gallery is lit like a haunted house, with lamps blooming from unlikely corners. It is a large, open venue that Naj has seen before, but it's been completely transformed.... Naj finds herself drawn to it, mesmerized" (83). The large placard of the art gallery throws light on the liminal relationship of Lebanon and Syria,

The decision to display these photographs in Lebanon is a deliberate one—the new nations have coexisted in a delicate, forced ecosystem since Lebanon's independence from what had been known to the Ottomans as Greater Syria. The artist, Syrian-born but currently living in Beirut, goes by Zizi and describes the countries as "reluctant stepsisters . . . they didn't choose each other, and yet the survival of one depends on the other. When one nation is in war, it is my belief that the other is as well. (84-85)

In the late 2010s, the family of Idris and Mazna chooses to spend their holiday vacation in Beirut. Actually, in the guise of *Azza* of the late Issa Nasar, the family came to sell the old house in Beirut. At that time, while finding the whereabouts of Hayat, whom Ava saw in several old family pictures, Ava learns that Hayat is her grandmother and she is Zakaria's daughter— a fact that Mazna and Idris have kept from her and one another for almost forty years. For Ava, her complete existence becomes liminal as she is not aware of her real father and the man to whom she had been considering a father is not her real father:

Her father is dead. Her father is a dead Palestinian who was killed in the camps, and knifed like an animal. And her father, her father-father, the one who speaks with hearts and loves tiramisu, is a few miles away lying to all of them about why he's selling the house, the way her mother has been lying about Zakaria, the way everyone lies about everything. (407)

In their ways, all three siblings are facing some liminal dilemmas. Ava is doubting her husband who is the father of her two children Rayan and Zina, Mimi is not loyal towards her partner as he indulges in kissing a girl of his band which results in the closure of his band and Naj is struggling with her queer identity. Mazna and Idris come back from America to Beirut to sell the old house but can't sell the same. The liminality lies in the fact that they are attached to the house but at the same time they want to run away from the past by selling the house. This house put them in a liminal situation. As Sara says to Idris, "It made sense only afterward. These past few days, he's felt released. You were never going to sell the house; Sara told him that night in the hospital. You just wanted to believe you could. That you could erase the past like that" (442). However, the ending of the novel seems to be a post-liminal stage when all of the characters reach a transition. Idris realizes that neither he can sell his ancestral house nor he can

snap his connection from his roots. Mazna finally confronts Hayat and Sara, by crying while hugging Hayat lessening her pain of Zakaria's death, after so many years once again she feels at home in the Beirut house. Mimi and Naj sing together on the same stage. Naj gets the courage to invite and convince Mimi to sing with her on stage and Mimi's jealousy for Naj vanishes. Ava gets to know about her real father and wants to stay in Beirut for some more time,

From here to there, however—an entire galaxy. The camps flooding in the winter.
Her new grandmother making dinner. Music and lesbians and, up to the north,
an entire country wolfed from the inside. Her mother's house. Her theater school.
Her first stages. They can't know this, but there are new people in that house now.
The windows have been cracked for two years. And in the south is Palestine. A
land so unknown to her it feels like a concept. Something she half belongs to now.
(439)

The novels of Hala Alyan portray ample situations and characters where liminal identities and liminal dilemmas can be traced. These situations arise due to diaspora and transnational movement of people and characters. The migrants living in refugee camps or the nations where they don't live for a long time are found living at a liminal space as it is an in-between place, this home is not their permanent home; it's a liminal place between their old and new home. They keep ties with the past and want to move forward with the future as well. This solidarity with both the past and the present puts them in a liminal phase because neither they can erase the past nor accept the future. The incidents shown in the novel, when the people of the same community form groups together in a foreign land then, create *communitas* because they have the same cultural background and they have the same motive of preserving their ethnicity and staying connected with their roots.

The situations portrayed by Hala Alyan when in a restaurant, show or exhibition the migrants talk and discuss their lost lands, past and culture for a short time it creates a liminoid experience because it is a short-timed experience that will affect them but it would not bring any transformation in them. The portrayal of certain characters living in liminal dilemmas related to their identity or nationality throughout their whole life can be termed as an example of permanent liminality as throughout their whole lives they could not decide where they belong. With the depiction of the migration of characters. Alyan has portrayed the passage of people from one place to another, the story of three-four generations of a family depicts the passage of time, when people migrate from their homeland to another country, then, from the native inhabitants, they become immigrants or refugees which depicts the passage of situation and status. In this way, the novels of Hala Alyan have portrayed various incidents, characters and situations that fit the key concepts and terminology of the theory of liminality.

In the guise of the life history of the families of migrants, both of the novels of Hala Alyan beautifully presented the in-between situation of the Palestinian migrants living in exile or another land, far from their homeland. The real-life challenges and solidarities towards both the roots and the present world have put them in liminal situations. Some of them are living in a state of permanent liminality as they are not sure whether the place, they are living at will be their permanent home or not. Sometimes, the people of the host land too are prejudiced against them which aggravates their pain of displacement. They bear the influences of the social, cultural and geographical factors around them but simultaneously nurture their ethnic identity.

Chapter 3

Tracing Liminality in the Poems of Hala Alyan

The poems of Hala Alyan are a realistic portrayal of the life narratives of Palestinian migrants living in various corners of the world. Her poems depict the themes of war, riots, displacements and trauma. The Palestinian-American author struggles to find her belongings both in America and Palestine and sometimes her poems depict the feelings of belonging neither here nor there. This feeling of not fully belonging to a certain nation or faith puts her in a liminal dilemma. She openly uses the names of various places and people in her poems and makes their memories permanent by making them a part of her poetry. Because in the short span of her life, she has been shifted to many nations and cities. She states the fact in an interview with Maryam Gamar, “I think I’ve struggled a lot on how to belong in the different places I’ve lived in and had access to. Beyond just being a member of a diaspora, [my family] also just moved a lot.” As, the theory of liminality talks about in-betweenness, the same in-betweenness occupies the central position in the poems of Hala Alyan.

In other words, literature serves as a reflection, revealing the liminal moments or transitional phases experienced by individuals as they pass through life. During these transitions, individuals may struggle to adapt to change and may feel trapped in a state of limbo. In the same way, she has portrayed the transition in her poetry which can be studied in the form of the liminal phases, liminal dilemma, liminal space, liminal passage and liminal moments in the life of Hala Alyan and the people around her. A glance at her poetry may give an insight into the liminal state of her mind. The analysis of poetry differs from the analysis of fiction or novels because the

poetic verse contains multiple meanings and often opens to the interpretations of the reader. In order to deal with such challenges while analyzing Hala Alyan's poetry certain presuppositions have been made on the bases of close reading of her novels, memoir, and the broader historical and political context of the Israel–Palestine conflict for better understanding of her works.

Alyan writes narrative poetry and her poetry doesn't follow any constrain of rhyme, meter or pattern. There can be a line of one or two alphabets and the whole poem can be in a single sentence. The references to Urdu and Arabic languages depict the effect of her ethnicity and the references to Western culture show her present life. The confluence of both forces put her at a liminal position and the same liminal thought has been revealed in her poetry. Hala Alyan's poetic style is characterized by a smooth, impressionistic manner that reflects the fragmented settings she writes about. Instead of following a clear, linear storyline, her poems move through associative connections, letting images, memories, and emotions meet in surprising ways. This flexible approach creates a tone that is both personal and drifting, mirroring the sense of displacement that appears throughout her work. Alyan often relies on sensory details such as smells, tastes, and sounds in order to create a vivid, embodied emotional space. Her frequent transitions between past and present add depth and complexity to her poems. Overall, her style favors uncertainty and mood over fixed meaning, encouraging readers to engage with the unsettled and shifting experiences that define diasporic life.

Alyan's writing style combines confessional lyricism with a controlled, psychologically aware voice. Drawing on her background as a clinical psychologist, she writes with careful attention to inner emotional life; her speakers are revealed through subtle actions, broken memories, and the hidden feelings within ordinary moments. Her language is clear but emotionally intense, and she often uses repetition to reflect the cyclical nature of trauma and

longing. Alyan also weaves in multilingual elements such as the Arabic names, cultural references, and linguistic textures which strengthen her narrative voice and highlight her transnational identity. Her lines move quickly and with momentum, creating a breathless pace that reflects the urgency of remembering, mourning, or wanting.

The major themes in Alyan's poetry revolve around displacement, intergenerational memory, the body, and the tension between belonging and estrangement. She writes extensively about the psychological and emotional residues of war, migration, and exile, exploring how these forces shape identity across generations. Love, addiction, loss, and self-invention also appear as recurring preoccupations, often framed within the larger context of cultural dislocation. Alyan's themes converge on the notion that home is not a stable location but a shifting constellation of memories, relationships, and emotional geographies. As Edward Said mentions about the fragmented nature of Palestinian identity in *After the Last Sky*, "Since the main features of our present existence are dispossession, dispersion, and yet also a kind of power incommensurate with our stateless exile, I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us" (6). Similarly, Hala Alyan employs fragmented structures and paratactic juxtapositions, arranging lines and stanzas in discontinuous sequences that evoke the realities of exile and displacement. This stylistic approach conveys the fragmented nature of diasporic existence, where memories, places, and identities remain incomplete and dispersed. By placing seemingly unrelated images and experiences side by side without explicit transitions, she captures the simultaneity of past and present, emphasizing the complex, multilayered, and fractured character of memory and identity in the diasporic experience.

Atrium by Hala Alyan is a collection of poems that explores various themes with a unique and original perspective. In this anthology, Alyan explores profound feelings of love, the pain of

loss, and a deep sense of yearning. She uses vibrant images and powerful metaphors to stir up intense emotions. The anthology was highly praised by critics and positioned Alyan as a promising poet in the literary world. Hala Alyan's debut book depicts a young poet with a broad perspective on exploring themes like diaspora, liminality, the trauma of displacement and war, the quest for identity and rootlessness. The Arab American National Museum also awarded *Atrium* as the 2013 Arab-American Poetry Book of the Year. She was one of the finalists in the Nazim Himeh Poetry Competition for her first poetry collection. "Maktoub," one of the poems in this collection, was a Pushcart Prize nominee.

A part of poems concerning each zodiac sign is included in *Atrium*'s opening. The absence of a definite storyline to anchor the reader makes this section feel a little more distinct than the rest of the book. She has beautifully explored the issues like female sexuality, family dynamics, locations, and political issues. The poems, particularly those portraying female experiences such as female desires, love, pregnancy, and motherhood, are particularly impactful. This poetry is sensual, and reverent, and explores the mysteries of the world. Alyan has discussed global issues in her poems using wildly creative imagery and a fierce passion.

In her poetry, she transforms ancient myths into modern tales to spotlight the destructive consequences of conflict. Top of Form She approaches astrology and love with unrestrained enthusiasm and personifies cities and nations. The poetry collection has covered versatile issues. Hala Alyan says in an interview that this collection includes even the poems she had written during her college days, which depict her different thoughts and moods. With her first collection of poetry, she has left her imprint on readers all across the world as early in her career.

Halyan has divided the *Atrium* into three parts. The first part of the book contains twelve poems and each poem is named after a zodiac sign like "Libra," "Aries," "Taurus," "Virgo" and

“Leo” etc. The second part contains eighteen poems and it shows as if each title tells the story of or an incident which she is depicting in a second person narrative, the titles of the poems are like, “Scarlett O’Hara at the Nightclub,” “Noir,” “Lulu,” “Phoebe’s Letter, Pandora,” “Sahar & Her Sisters,” “Teta,” “Mistress,” and “Barbie” etc. The third part contains twenty-six poems and some of them seem to be written like autobiographical poems in the form of a first-person narrative like, “Rehearsal,” “Dream,” “Palestinian-American,” “The Cello I Never Played,” “The Love Story That Is Not Mine,” “Nameling,” “Bellydancing,” “Beirut and I Want To Fall in Love With Woman named Zoe” etc.

In a poem entitled “Gemini,” from *Atrium*, she depicts the liminality of her existence by starting with the lines which means that the lithographic type of print depicts a wrinkled dome situated in this land. And it gets broken even by the Lightning, which is seen as a criticism or reproach. The writer is talking about her multiple homes in multiple places and the circumstances that made her relocate once again. As she further says. “Two years and a day after / we recite cities,” depicts her remembering of old cities and homes. Hala Alyan presents home as a symbolic space that exists primarily through memory rather than physical geography. The reference to the recitation of cities suggests that places once inhabited continue to survive through language and remembrance, even after displacement. Rather than functioning as fixed locations, these cities become repositories of personal and collective history, reflecting the diasporic experience of carrying one's homeland internally. But the speaker of the poem has faced the same displacement so many times that she wants to escape from the haunting thoughts by focusing on the simple things:

I think

sometimes

it is better to say the
 essence, to say, simply, the sky is beautiful today
 or
 please don't touch her, for, you see, I love you
 or
 you've taken something from me and I want it back
 instead of reaching always for poetry
 like a spear. (4)

In another poem with the title “Capricorn” from *Atrium*, which she is addressing to her brother Talal, Alyan discusses the liminality of the situation, where she is not sure whether the things happening around her are good or bad. The speaker of the poem finds herself in an in-between position. In the opening of the poem, she is missing her brother in a new city which despite being cold seems happy to her and the colourful beauty of the city attracts her. She imagines a girl who might have been crying for the loss of a ring. But then she misses her brother who might have loved and recited this story with his hematite words:

so many, too many, things in this
 world are awful
 or beautiful, depending on
 the time of day, the year

in your life

the angle you are tilting your head. (11)

Hala Alyan uses juxtaposition and antithesis by placing the opposite words "awful" and "beautiful" together, suggesting that the same situation can appear different depending on one's perspective. Alyan also employs enjambment, allowing the sentence to flow across several lines without a pause, which creates a natural rhythm and reflects the continuous movement of thought. Liminality can be traced when the poetess is enthralled by the beauty of the city and at the same time she is missing her brother, she is using the word "or" between awful and beautiful, which portrays that the same thing can be awful or beautiful. Perhaps the poetess herself is in a liminal position and speculating about the various perspectives of her present situation, she is unable to grasp whether the change is good or bad for her.

Alyan talks about the life of female sex workers and other spy agents who sexually seduce their victims in the poem "Honeypot" of Atrium. In the poem "Lady," she talks about a woman who got divorced in her thirties and who carries a bottle of whisky in her handbag. But immediately after these two poems in the poem "Pandora," where she talks about the concept of sin and repentance. These poems depict the liminal position of the speaker where she is struck between Western culture and cultural roots. Having sex for money and drinking alcohol might be common in western cultures but a female with Arab roots might have a feeling of sin after experiencing such things. The dilemma between the pull of culture and the pull of ethical values puts the poetess in a liminal position and she thinks about the repentance and the common behaviour of the people after doing something profane:

When you sin,

you go to church.

Cut your hair and watch French films.

drink nothing

but tea for

an entire winter. (24)

In “Sahar & Her Sisters” from *Atrium*, the issue of female foeticide has been discussed, where the daughters have been termed as cancer and the midwife has also been set on fire by the father of the child after the birth of the fourth daughter. There are also references to the erasure of the uterus of the females. But at the end, the poetess touches on a queer subject where the love of a woman to a woman has been cited. According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica, “Queer, in sexual politics, description of sexuality that rejects normative definitions of appropriate feminine and masculine sexual behaviour... A queer community may be made up of people who identify as lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender and so on.” In the given poem the liminal position arises when the typical father doesn’t accept this love and refuses to accept this type of love because it is not the type of love that is considered love by that man. The last line poses a liminal question for the readers the loveless man who has killed his girl child, the same person is defining love. Perhaps due to the cruelty of the male members in the family of the protagonist of the poem, the girls have got attracted towards the queer lovemaking of a woman with another woman which in itself is a liminal condition:

.... This is what is meant by romance. When a story comes

To a village about women who love women, women who drain

women, the fathers say, close your legs, daughters. Say,

You don't love the way that I love so that can't be love. (Sahar & Her Sisters 27)

The multiple displacements and migrations in the lives of the people of Palestinian origin have brought a remarkable change in their lives. It's never an easy task to uproot oneself and then settle somewhere else. The memories of the previous place and fear of settling at a new place have been nicely portrayed by Alyan in her poem "Rehearsal" from *Atrium*. She remembers that on her first day in this place, she cried bare feet on the terrace and at the same time she imagines that after some days once again they will have to leave this place and once again her father will be taking them to a new place thinking about the perspective of the safety of his family. As she says:

Four weeks from now'

I will board a plane in a

New winter coat. My father

Stamps out the cigarette

and clears his throat. I am safe.

In a moment, he will speak. (48)

The incidents of violence, murder and bloodshed have been cited in the poem "Dream" of *Atrium*. The speaker of the poem talks about the killing of a known person and the body was so

much disfigured that she recognized the corpse by its wrist. Then suddenly the thought process shifts towards her stay in Dubai and the smell of desert. But the memory of the murder has not been erased from her mind. It haunts her mind, wherever she goes. Even when she has been shifted to a different geographical place, the trauma of the same bloodshed haunts her mind. The trauma of that death has put the speaker in a liminal position as she is unable to accept the fact and talk with the dead person in her dream by asking about his whereabouts. The following lines depict the mental state of the speaker:

I write you. Where are you?

I dream of it again. The blood everywhere.

They tire you, I know,

irksome,

these catastrophes

I bed.

Fine, you write back.

I'm fine. (50-51)

The repeated use of first-person narration in the above-mentioned lines create an intimate and personal tone, drawing readers into the speaker's emotional world. The image "The blood everywhere" is an example of vivid imagery, conveying the horror and violence of conflict in a

striking visual form. The brief exchange, "Fine, you write back. / I'm fine," uses irony, as the repeated assurance of being "fine" contrasts with the preceding images of blood and catastrophe, suggesting suppressed pain rather than genuine well-being.

The title of the poem "Palestinian-American" from *Atrium* is in itself self-explaining. The reference to two nations with someone's identity alludes to the liminal identity of the Palestine-born people and their upcoming generations who have migrated to America. The speaker confesses that she is in love with another city. The speaker is speaking aloud about her identity that she is a daughter of a Palestinian refugee. The life of refugees is an example of permanent liminality because as long they are not given the nationality of a new nation or they are permanently settled back in their previous nation, they are living a liminal life and the life and identity of their children is also liminal. The liminal cry of lost land and displacement is written in the following lines of the poem:

Misplace:

enormously. Brother

and sister,

gift of spine-

fury. I call to myself as minarets do. (53)

Alyan, delves into the themes of love and desire in places such as Paris and New York City, juxtaposing them with the harsh realities experienced in cities like Gaza, Ramallah, and Baghdad in the book *Four Cities*. One aspect that makes this writing so breathtaking is Alyan's capacity to execute these two things at once. This collection deftly explores topics like love and

conflict. It evokes both sadness and motivation, blending lyrical beauty with a somber tone, and stirring feelings of nostalgia intertwined with tears. These poems mix the private life and the public life to create deeply felt poetry. This poetry can mesmerize readers, immersing them in a dreamlike state, while also confronting them with the harsh realities of the world. Despite the collection's unafraid examination of subjects like warfare and occupation, the poetry conveys a sense of hope in their almost prayerlike lines.

Alyan recognises the shifting nature of her identity by viewing some places with a dreamy wonder and other places with a sorrowful perspective. In some parts, her poetry laments over the lost Palestinian identity and reflects decades of occupation and the atrocities of war, whereas on the other hand, she is an American with freedom and the desire to travel. The specific allusion to Gaza in the poem adds a special element of gloom and dread. Womanhood is another component of identity that is examined in the collection. Womanhood is coupled with many natural calamities and personal storms. The poems refer to rain, storms, and wild animals that scurry conditions or that are threatening and haunting them. Another guiding principle in this book is the idea of dreams or a fantastical dream world in which the poetry takes place.

The poetry collection has a total of fifty-six poems and it has been divided into two parts with a poem entitled “Music” which serves as a sort of preface before the two parts. The first part contains thirty poems and the second part contains twenty-five poems. All of the poems are on diverse themes containing the writer’s cosmopolitan experiences and memories of cities like Gaza, Iraq, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, Paris Michigan etc.

The liminality of faith and identity crisis is discussed by the poetess in the poem “All Morning, the Fight:” of *Four Cities*. Hala Alyan has used the literary device of personification in this poem, where she is treating the city like a living being. In the first line the poetess is talking

about some god, which has been invoked in her by someone else, on the other hand in the fourth line she talks about being grown up godless. Perhaps she is missing her religious rites and tradition value system in a foreign land or she is unable to adjust in a foreign land. She confesses in the following line about her lack of understanding of this city where she has been considered a liar. The liminal condition of not being accepted at a place where she has to live and living at a place without having an understanding of the same makes her cry:

... Our faces lanterned.

We never grasped that city, even as we sat in her toes,

Kissing. The men do not write. I am to them a toxin,

A liar with the canvassed truth. I touch the sassafras and cry. (8)

Alyan has given references of so many cities and places like Gaza, Beirut, New Orleans, Boston, Rome, Dubai, Aleppo, Istanbul, Ramallah, Dublin, Jerusalem, Brooklyn, London, Paris and so on in the poem "Push" from *Four Cities*. She discusses the contribution of each place to her personality. She feels sorry for Gaza and is in love with Beirut. She is thankful to Ramallah for the appreciation. Even after twenty-six years, the city named Baghdad makes her cry. She thinks that only Jerusalem knows about her true potential. She asks for forgiveness from Gaza repeatedly and wants to talk about her whereabouts in that city. Her reverence towards the Palestinian cities and other Arab places along with the appreciation of Western cities depicts her liminal condition. Neither does she want to get separated from her roots nor does she want to cut herself off from her present cultural and geographical condition. She is struck at a permanently liminal position, as her poem depicts:

Gaza. I am sorry. Ramallah. Thank you for the applause.

Seltzer water and *tableh* player. Tomato and bread. Thank you for the
 Balcony. Dubai. I forgot a scarf a silver ring a tube of lipstick.
 The rest you may keep. Aleppo. Forgive me my litter. My uneaten
 rice. My abundance of lightbulbs. Baghdad. Twenty
 six years and you still make me cry. (10)

In this poem, Hala Alyan uses several literary devices to portray the emotional and historical impact of war and displacement. The repeated naming of cities such as Gaza, Ramallah, Dubai, Aleppo, and Baghdad is an example of repetition, emphasizing the widespread experience of conflict across the Middle East. She employs apostrophe by directly addressing these cities as if they were living beings capable of hearing apologies and gratitude. The contrasting expressions "I am sorry," "Thank you," and "Forgive me" create juxtaposition, highlighting the coexistence of guilt, gratitude, loss, and affection. Alyan also uses symbolism, where ordinary objects such as a scarf, a silver ring, lipstick, rice, and lightbulbs symbolize personal memories, home, and the remnants of lives interrupted by war.

Along with the liminality caused by displacement, Hala Alyan has also touched on some general issues of everyday life too, where liminality can be traced. In the poem "You, Bonsai Girl," from *Four Cities*, she tried to discuss the liminal condition of a woman who is the victim of forceful sex. The topic of female sexuality and marital rape is still a taboo in certain societies. She gives a reference to such an incident in America. She wonders how can a woman keep her body as still as if she is an object. Being a human being but killing her self-esteem and behaving as an object puts a woman in a liminal position, where she is physically alive but her soul is dead. Alyan depicts the liminal condition of a woman by calling her an object:

I hear you, ghost,
 Your voice minnowing the sag of mattress
 Even in America. Prophecy,
 How you held your body still in his bed
 you were no woman, but object. (16-17)

The diasporic cry of the poetess is found in “Sestina for December” of *Four Cities*, where she is found immersed in the memory of a place in the east where people worship another God and have another weather and culture in comparison with her present state in Brooklyn. She has beautifully depicted how people try to keep a connection with their roots via various mediums like letters, ethnic food, jewelry and other articles. But these connections can’t fully connect them to their roots when they are physically far from the place of their origin. The liminal dilemma arises when the ethnic jewelry food and other things seem out of place in a different place and lose their original value. Alyan speaks her thoughts aloud in the following lines:

My mother mails me envelopes across the ocean: God
 Necklaces, gold pendants, calligraphy intricates as wedding cake.
 I wear a lovely blue eye, the verse about a mouth.
 But even the holy jewelry becomes ice: such air
 Turns my earring into hammer. (20)

In these lines, Hala Alyan employs several literary devices to explore themes of cultural identity, migration, and emotional isolation. The phrase "My mother mails me envelopes across

the ocean" uses symbolism, where the ocean represents both the physical and emotional distance created by diaspora, while the mailed gifts symbolize the mother's enduring love and the preservation of cultural heritage. The references to God necklaces, gold pendants, and calligraphic designs create vivid imagery, evoking the beauty of religious and cultural traditions. The evil-eye amulet and the Quranic verse function as symbols of protection, faith, and familial connection. However, the line "the holy jewelry becomes ice" employs metaphor to suggest that these cherished objects lose their warmth and comforting power in the unfamiliar environment of exile. Similarly, "my earring into hammer" is a powerful metaphor, indicating that what once represented beauty and protection now feels heavy and burdensome.

The time when people are migrating from one place or nation to another can be termed as a liminal passage especially when they are not sure whether they will be welcomed or tortured in the new place. After the declaration of the independent state of Israel, millions of Palestinians had to leave their homes, farms and other belongings and they started their voyages in search of a new place to settle down. In the poem, "And in Iraq, Fires" from *Four Cities*, Halyan has explored the theme of the liminal passage where the migrants have crossed the borders of seven nations in search of a safe place to settle in. She has hinted the after-effects of wars like the hungry people, the stolen childhood, deaths and displacements in the given words:

Seven nationalities yoked

Together in this cavern,

We are frantic with love.

I am the slack one, eating a plum without washing

It and writing a song for Hagar waiting

With bare mouth to kiss the ankle

Of soil. (26)

The poem “Z, at a dinner in Michigan” from *Four Cities*, describes a person who is sixty-two years old and loves Greek. He has, “carried all of Jenin” on the stacking of his back. He opens the can of a bear named Coor and shows affection towards his daughters while showing the jacket’s sleeve where he stitched the flag of his nation. He is a victim of mockery by boys who call him a terrorist because of his old nationality. But that man sticks to his faith and even in the snow storms doesn’t miss going to the mosques for his prayers. The rain reminds him of his home in Iraq, where his mother used to put a pot of boiling water for making tea in such weather, but despite the memories of his motherland and the nostalgia, he is happy to see his happy children in a foreign land. The liminality lies in his mixed feelings of sorrow and joy. He gets sad to think about the lost land yet he is happy to see his children safe and at peace, as she states:

... I want to tell him I wrote a name

Not a wish

on the scrap of paper

I hid beneath the tones. I want to say teach

me how to love one country

without hating the other. (35)

Hala Alyan employs repetition, symbolism, and paradox to portray the emotional complexities of diasporic identity in above mentioned poem. The repeated phrase "I want to" show the speaker's deep desire to articulate feelings that remain difficult to express. The “scrap

of paper” serves as a symbol of concealed identity, memory, and personal aspirations, suggesting that the speaker's concerns extend beyond individual wishes to questions of belonging and selfhood. The concluding lines, "teach me how to love one country / without hating the other," present a powerful paradox, expressing the challenge of maintaining affection for both the homeland and the adopted country without experiencing divided loyalties. This paradox also serves as a metaphor for the divided identity of diasporic people, showing their emotional struggle to love both their homeland and their adopted country while trying to find a true sense of belonging.

Under the guise of her poetry Alyan depicts the filial love and relations too. As in the poem “Meimei” from *Four Cities*, Alyan muses about her grandmother. She describes how her grandmother’s late father used to soothe her in her dreams when she was traumatized by the exclusion from her homeland. Then her thoughts run towards the Turkish soap opera she used to watch in Syria and her grandmother’s insistence upon the institution of marriage. Her grandmother tells Hala that before her mother she had another daughter who was born in Jaffa but she could not survive and died before the loss of their home and homeland. She says that some strangers drew them towards Jordan and Syria and helped them to settle there. The grandmother still holds her traditional values and she wants her granddaughter to come back to her homeland after completion of her studies. She doesn’t want her to fall in love with America. The liminality lies in the situation that the grandmother is calling her home whereas she is living in a place that is not her real home. The words of the grandmother are:

You’re coming back

when you finish, I know you are. What

could you want that is not in this country,
 in this sea and this mountain? May Allah give
 you every mercy, every blessing. Don't
 fall in love with America, okay? (41)

“The Immigrant’s Children” from *Four Cities*, depicts the liminal identity of the children born to the immigrants. Neither they belong to the homeland of their parents, nor do they are accepted as natives of the nation, where they are living. They belong to both of the nations and at the same don’t belong fully to either of the nations. Their identity becomes liminal in context with their religious beliefs, customs and language too. Because these children carry the effect of both their home’s traditional environment and society’s modern environment. In this poem, the children of the migrants call themselves warriors as they are struck to their faith despite so many hardships. The poem depicts the pain of such children in the following words:

A firework sizzles above
 our heads. We pray. Allah,
 Allah. the graveyard shines
 with rain. Unlaced, we are
 the daughters with overfed
 beds, a warrior’s faith. (71)

It’s a herculean task to forget one’s homeland and the memories of homeland become a trauma when people have been forcefully expelled from their happy homes, that too without any

fault. With time, these memories enhance the anguish when one finds no way back home and all the connections are snapped. The agony has so much occupied the mind of the speaker of the poem “Marketplace” from *Four Cities*, where the speaker is looking for places associated with Palestine in the marketplace. Every day she searches for buses that can take her to old towns of Palestine. The repeated use of Palestinian towns like, Nablus, Hebron and Jaffa are the symbols of her Palestinian roots, her remembrance of her ethnicity and cultural roots. The liminality lies in the speaker’s search for the places, which no longer exist around her, as Alyan describes the condition of such a migrant in these words:

... A boy at the refugee
 camp taps his cigarette, waves
 widely as though he is erasing
 something. Every day I walk the
 winding road east to the cluster
 of buses. I ask for Nablus. I ask
 for Hebron. I ask for Jaffa. (82-83)

Hala Alyan's third collection of poetry *Hijra*, is a reflection of the haunting details of her transnational trips as well as the journeys of her mother, her aunts, and the other female forefathers in Gaza and Syria. The reader learns about conflict, immigration, and diaspora while also hearing the silenced voices of women of colour. The poems convey the burden of an emotional and experiential journey through poetic language and vivid imagery. They grow longer and more intricate, reflecting the achievements of the women portrayed in the poems as they

reclaim their identities through determination and bravery. Alyan explores how physical spaces are altered, conveyed, and recollected through prose, narrative, and confessional-style poetry. Her tone is distinctive, modern, suitable, and kind.

The term "Hijra" in Arabic, originating from Mohammed's journey to Medina, symbolizes a courageous departure. A confident woman is the voice of these engaging poems and she is committed to creating a strong and enduring language. This language can express both the concealed destruction of a "lost city" and the dignity of mourning mothers and other women mentioned in this collection. Hijra is not a typical cry or lament. It represents a distinctive testimony, a necessary revelation, a painstakingly earned harmony, and a timeless tale.

The collection is divided into four main sections taking the readers on a journey through time, showing the undeniable upheavals of everyday life. In this book, a poem entitled "Ancestry" serves as a preface to this book. The first part of the book contains twelve poems. The second section of the book has fifteen poems, each with a name of an Arabic woman as the title. Through this, Alyan offers a re-evaluation of individual identity, particularly that of women. Whether or not these names correspond to actual people in the poet's life, they strike a chord with Arab readers because of their familiarity and stress the value of women's unique identities. The third part contains ten poems on diasporic themes. The fourth part has fourteen poems and except one all the titles have of the poems are in the form of a single word. Throughout this section in each poem, there is a consistent tone and narrative approach that echoes a universal condition shared by people living in exile and diaspora.

Hala Alyan laments over the dispersal of her people in various parts of the world in the poem "Ancestry" from *Hijra*. She compares them with the seeds thrown in the sea, which grow in the bodies of sea creatures and spread to different parts of the world. If we study the history of

Palestine, it is found that after the exodus the Palestinians had to scatter in different parts of the world around Palestine and they had to face multiple migrations too where some of them finally got settled in western countries like America too. With the migration to various countries the traditional culture, faith values and religious customs too get changed according to the resources and the culture of the host nation. It seems to Alyan that these changes have dwarfed her God too and she tells how her father recalls the soil of his homeland:

I'll lament the seeds flung

into ocean. Roots in fish gut

and everywhere the cities leak

mouths. What remains of god is

dwarfed, taken; stars expire

beneath clouds; a comet trickles

ice... (1)

Alyan remembers the lost land, its cultural dresses, customs like applying henna on hands and the other surroundings in the poem "Ancestry" of *Hijra*. But now she is at a new place where she finds herself out of place and compares herself with dust. She compares her stay in the new

place with exile. While remembering the old home she is trying to adapt to the new one by learning the ways of new life at a new place as they have no other option. Because the place where they used to live, and the streets where they used to dance are now filled with bullets and those who were left over there, they had to embrace death. The helplessness of the speaker and her liminal position of endeavors to adjust to a new place with the baggage of old memories puts her at a liminal position. Alyan describes the liminal state of the speaker's mind in the following words:

... Even in this strange city, fruit dust itself
 with spores. I am a dirt toward which rain rushes,
 garlanding, your body dusky with the exile of sleep.
 We practice a new alphabet. Love
 They say the bullets are filling the streets we danced in.
 They say the lucky are dead. (21)

In the above lines, the expression "this strange city" functions as a symbol of exile and estrangement, emphasizing the speaker's feeling of isolation and lack of belonging in an unfamiliar place. In the same way, "We practice a new alphabet" serves as a metaphor for adapting to a new language, culture, and way of life, reflecting the ongoing process of reconstructing identity in exile. The concluding statement, "They say the lucky are dead,"

employs both irony and paradox, presenting death as a release from suffering and underscoring the immense physical and emotional devastation caused by war and conflict.

The poem “Afra” from *Hijra*, is in the form of an address to someone addressed as “Dear S”. The poem presents vivid imagery of the scene where the people coming from a war-hit nation had to go through strict checking and questioning at the time of arrival. The cheap officers even embarrass the females by moving the rifles throw their skirts and footwear. They are even asked about old cities like Mousel and their connection with them. but the migrants consider those places dead as they no longer can return to the places of their origin. The poetess creates a liminal situation when she cites the reference to Christianity by giving the example of the “Cain and Abel Story.” At one place the poet is talking about a historic Arab town, at another place she claims that she can repeat the words of Cain to Abel and in the last line she is talking about making a temple. She is in a liminal position and unable to clarify to which faith she should stick, as she says:

They’re burning tanks again.

In the airport custody room, they asked me

where I come from and I said yes.

I let them open my suitcase, rifle though

The skirts and sandals, that pillbox

Your mother left me. No, I said nothing

when they asked of you, wanting to know

about Mosul and the seven afterlives,

I only said you were dead. (33)

The examples of liminal space can be traced in the poem, “Asylum” from *Hijra*. The poet talks about the orders to burn the keys of their homes and the gathering of people around the borders with some photographs and letters kept as memories of Palestine. They are standing at the border and remember that at this place the violence towards their people started and even the children were not spared. The border in itself is a liminal space because it is a place that serves as a point to connect the boundary of two nations along with separating them. She recalls how they are being called by the names of their lost villages at the foreign land which are no longer their villages as now they belong to someone else. But they are still being addressed by the names of the villages which no longer belong to them:

We walked to the borders
with photographs and letters:
this is where the dying began
their dying, this is where
they knifed the children.

The judges call us in
by our cities. Jericho. Latakia. Haditha. (39)

Children adjust easily to a new place, culture or environment, in comparison with the elders. A similar situation arises in the poem “The Letter Home” of *Hijra*, where the speaker is a female and she seems to be visiting the home of his son in a foreign land. She is happy to see the

happiness of her young grandchildren but she is unable to understand their language and the children are equally bad at her language. The speaker is writing a letter to her sister residing back in the hometown and describing all the beauties joys and new things like the lighthouse and the supermarkets. But even after seeing his children peacefully settled and prosperous, her heart aches for her home, she is missing her home and the things which she can't find in this land. The contentment of a mother on seeing her children and grandchildren happily prospering is juxtaposed with the pain for lost home which depicts her liminal emotions in the given words:

... Tell her

you miss your city like a lung. You miss the cakes, the fickle sea

washing along driftwood, the way even the locusts bring music, tell

her you wake at dawn weeping for figs, and when she writes back

she will call you a fool, she will say sister, sister, they've turned this

land into a grave. (44)

In poem “Chirophobia” of *Hijra*, Alyan discusses the story of a bleeding woman with “refugee green” eyes. The word chirophobia is associated with the fear of hands. The woman she is talking about might be her patient. The poetess is asking for forgiveness as she had to wash the hands of that woman. The woman talks in Arabic first and then another language and her talks remind Hala of the Temples of Mayan of Tulum. The female says that she used to be a singer at a restaurant of a place where travelers used to come for the trade of diamond and silk and one of such persons married her, filled her wrists with gold jewelry and took her to a decorated place. In winter the women would have strange dreams of holding the scales. The story ends and the

woman starts crying in the clinic. This incident reminds the poet about the letters she wishes to send to the people in her homeland but she disposes them off. She thinks that she as in chiophobia people is afraid of touching, in the same way she is in a liminal position of keeping a correspondence with the lost home or not keeping the correspondence. Alyan describes:

... Back at home, I composed letters, then fed
 them one by one to the bathwater. Dear, I once crushed a viola to the
 ground. Dear, I am a cell beneath a sunless eye. Afraid to touch, and
 more afraid not to. (65)

Like the foliage of a plant the foliage of memories have been beautifully portrayed in the poem entitled “Foliage” of *Hijra*. The speaker of the poem is in a conversation with her grandmother and asking about the latter’s childhood and the memories of Damascus. After the conversation, she imagines her grandmother in a scarf over her head while praying and reciting the words, “*insh’Allah ya rab.*” Then there is a sudden change of thought where it seems as if the grandmother has stopped recognizing the narrator and the grandchild is trying to make her familiar with the things. In the last place, the liminal mental condition of the grandmother is portrayed when the children say that she is ill because the trauma of lost land has made her an Alzheimer's patient. She is living in the present but her mind is living in the past and she thinks that she is being waited for in Syria by her father and is furious to miss the imaginary bus which might take her to her home. Her poignant account has been described in given words:

Binti, the root is the last to die.

In America, I say my grandmother is ill, I say there is a blankness
 Feathering her, that she fills teacups and believes her father is
 Waiting for her in Syria, furious that she missed the last rickety bus
 Home. Beyond the bars smelling of yeast, dusk drops its mink
 across the city. (Foliage 51)

In these lines from "Foliage," Hala Alyan explores memory, exile, and intergenerational identity. The statement "Binti, the root is the last to die" is a powerful metaphor, where the root symbolizes ancestry, cultural heritage, and the enduring connection to one's homeland. The repeated phrase "I say" is an example of repetition, emphasizing the speaker's attempt to communicate the pain of separation and family loss. The grandmother's belief that her father is waiting for her in Syria serves as symbolism, illustrating how memory preserves the homeland despite physical displacement. The image of the "last rickety bus / Home" symbolizes the longing for return and the fragile hope of reconnecting with one's roots.

In *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, Alyan explores memory using powerful poetic metaphors that evoke feelings of sadness, guilt, remorse and regret. Alyan explores the concept of aging through personal stories that combine to create a powerful recognition. They emphasize how experiences in youth, which shape our truths, are crucial for gaining wisdom. *The Twenty-Ninth Year* collection of poems features a sophisticated and stylish variety of forms. Alyan goes through exciting and important events like discovering her sexual identity, starting to drink, dealing with anorexia, facing cultural clashes, and experiencing tension with her family. These experiences are all connected by their intense impact on her life.

This collection of poetry by Alyan includes both neatly lineated poems and prose poems. Alyan's lyric imagery is powerful in all of its forms in a way that is simultaneously beautiful and violent. She highlights the internal conflicts that exist in all of us, but especially in those of us who are dealing with circumstances beyond our control. The poems are set in both the Middle East and the Midwest of the United States, and the setting is exquisitely depicted. No place is entirely safe in this collection of poetry, place and family history both play important roles in safety and danger.

In *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, Hala Alyan portrays the resilience needed to withstand deep emotional and personal struggles. In this linguistic exploration of Hala Alyan's identity, language emerges as a dynamic, living force that both shapes and mirrors the complexity of human existence. Alyan's poetic language reveals that her use of words extends beyond artistic expression to become a powerful act of resistance. Each poem becomes a step in her ongoing inquiry into selfhood and society.

The first poem, "Truth," introduces the speaker, who continues to share her struggles with anorexia and alcoholism courageously throughout the anthology. The poems include moments of happiness and love, but Alyan focuses on exploring the subconscious to tell a story of a troubling year filled with both physical and emotional challenges. Alyan's poetry struggles to define love and heartache by studying the depth of the human soul and the challenge of coping with fleeting memories of grief and regret. Other poems portray grief as sudden memories, vividly describing the physical features of loved ones, family members, spouses, friends, and more. Several of the poems in the anthology deal with the process of alcohol detoxification and the ongoing pain that remains once numbness fades. A group of poems categorised as gospels, such as "Gospel: Texas" and "Gospel: Rumi," form another theme in the anthology. The gospel poems support the

speaker, a young lady in her twenty-ninth year, by bringing together scattered memories and molding them into a series of narratives that provide meaning to pain and its aftereffects.

Alyan has written a total of fifty-four poems in this collection. The poem “Truth” serves as a preface and it’s followed by five parts. The first part contains ten poems, the second part has thirteen poems, the third part has seventeen poems, the fourth part has twelve parts and the last part has only one poem entitled “Thirty.” The titles of some of her poems are longer in comparison with her previous poems. Although the poetess has tried to portray diverse themes in this anthology, yet it seems more like a battle with self. Her first poem “Truth” is a form of confession where the speaker starts by telling her dislikes for hair colour and silver. Then she expresses her love for the “Aztecs” tribe of Mexico. She expresses that she won’t ever look as beautiful as the night she danced drunk in a garage with a girl who was trying to seduce her. She confirms that one night she got drunk and had an argument with the ideology of nations around the Pacific Sea.

The speaker of the poem openly talks about her physical relationships with men when she reaches twenty. She also hung Christmas lights during the winter season in the same year and fought with the Italian Owner of the house to keep the Christmas lights on. She says that on each night she had a desire to drink but she resisted it. The liminal state of the speaker’s mind is depicted in the last line, as in Arab communities, women are forbidden to drink but still she drinks one night. Later she tries to keep the Christian lights on; it symbolizes her growing faith in Christianity or repentance of her sexual activity by seeking refuge from God. The liminal state is aptly found in the last line where she wants to drink as a result of the environment around her but her inner conscience and values don’t let her drink alcohol, as the speaker narrates,

I got drunk one night

and argued with the Pacific. I was twenty. I broke
 into the bodies of men like a cartoon burglar. I wasn't twenty.
 In the winter of those years I kept Christmas lights
 strung around my bed and argued with the Italian landlady
 who lived downstairs about turning the heat off,
 and every night I wanted to drink but didn't. (1)

The liminal passage full of hardships has been described by Alyan in a realistic way in the poem, "The Female of the Species" of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. She portrays a moving image of females, babies and their families going to leave their homeland with suitcases and boxes full of spices and other materials, which they could carry with them. She compares the queue of these migrants with the lined-up bottles of wine. The poetess says that whenever she drinks, she tells the stories of women she knows. She remembers their impulsive weddings and celebrations by throwing the spaghetti of the time when they were younger than Hala Alyan's present-day age. The old memories of the new year celebration with the words, "*ana bint Beirut*" still haunt her mind but now she doesn't have even a short-term memory to tell her about the scary dreams when she tries to shout to stop her. The speaker says that the old memories of migration have so occupied her mind that she will need a knife to erase the old memories to make a place for the new, although she is living in the present the traumatic memories of the past haunt her mind:

They leave the country with gasping babies and suitcases
 full of spices and cassettes. In airports,
 they line themselves up like wine bottles.

The new city twinkles beneath an onion moon.

Birds mistake the pebbles of glass on the

black asphalt for bread crumbs. (5)

Alyan recounts her family's painful journey across various places in America, along with short stays in the Middle East in the poem “Armadillo” of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. All these journeys depict the liminal passage of her family from one place to another. She recounts that these travels started in Kuwait in 1980 when her mother was a newlywed wife of seventeen years. The journeys continued and she gave birth to her three children at different places. She even mentions some places like New Orleans, the basement of their house in Maine, Vierzon near Paris, Iraq and Scotland where her mother completed her graduation. She tries to explain the ironic reality of life that whatever we predict for our future, doesn't come true. Vivid recollections of her mother's tears, her brother's alcohol consumption, her father's affection, and her sister's arrival illustrate that while their surroundings may shift, the anguish remains constant. Hala misses the old home in Doha and her parents helplessly accept the sad reality that all of the love, joys and luxury could not buy them the thing they loved at the first place which is their homeland:

Vierzon, three hours south of Paris. We all lie in the dark and watch the

old stars with their arcade lights. We predict our fortune for the coming

years. None of it comes true. I marry. Talal stops drinking. Miriam

learns to turn her phone off. The Doha villa still makes me cry and it

takes a decade to understand what my parents always knew: all the love

in the world won't buy you what you wanted in the first place.

... What do we do with heartache? Tow it. (9)

A contemplation on identity, history, and the notion of home, offering a realistic portrayal of her experiences within the state named Oklahoma of America is portrayed in the poem “Oklahoma” from *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. Hala Alyan portrays her complex relationship with the state. The speaker gives references to Oklahoma, whereas in the first line, she expresses her hatred for the place. She provides some historical aspects of the place by touching upon aspects like the Cherokee, the tornadoes, the gold rush, and the relationship of white men and brown women, along with the songs related to cotton plantations and the prayers of God. The speaker finds comfort in small moments such as the sound of a tornado siren canceling school or sharing a meal at the Olive Garden. The poem also describes the personal anecdotes, including the speaker's childhood memories of school, and interactions with Mexican girls. The speaker's mother discourages her from speaking Mexican, emphasizing their immigrant background. The poet finds herself at a liminal position because to become friends with the Mexican girls, she imitates them and tries to learn their language but at her home, her mother scolds her for trying to learn a foreign language as she looks down upon that language. As she narrates the incident:

... The Mexican girls let me sit with them as long as I braid

their hair, my fingers dipping into that wet black silk. I try to imitate

them at home—mirame, mama—but my mother yells at me, says they

didn't come here so I could speak some beggar language. (15)

The image of the speaker braiding the Mexican girls' hair and describing it as "wet black silk" is an example of vivid imagery and metaphor, emphasizing both the beauty of cultural difference and the speaker's admiration for it. The use of the Spanish phrase "mírame, mama" illustrates code-switching, highlighting the speaker's attempt to embrace another language and culture. The mother's dismissal of Spanish as "some beggar language" creates irony, exposing the prejudice that immigrants may develop toward other marginalized communities while seeking acceptance in a new society. This contrast also functions as juxtaposition, placing the speaker's curiosity and openness alongside the mother's rejection of cultural assimilation. Alyan portrays the liminal tension between preserving one's cultural identity, adapting to a new environment, and negotiating belonging across different linguistic and cultural communities.

The poem "1999" from *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, is full of vivid imagery and storytelling. The poem paints a poignant portrait of the speaker's upbringing, characterized by both moments of joy and challenges, and illuminates how these experiences have shaped her identity. It commences with the speaker's memories about life in a desert, remembering the flavors of za'atar from her mother's cooking in Iraq and the familiarity of her grandmother's home in Syria. The poem recounts some small moments like eating prickly pears, despite the discomfort they caused. The poem also describes the partial behavior of the teachers who dislike foreign students. The influence of the mother tongue always puts a child in a liminal position as it doesn't let them become easily fluent in a foreign language. A similar situation puts the poet in a liminal position where she finds herself unable to pronounce her name properly in English:

I had lived in a desert before. I did. I forgot the za'atar my mother said

she fed me in Iraq. I forgot my grandmother's house in Soo-ree-yaa. There

I was, eating the prickly pears even though they always made my tongue
itch. A teacher in Texas told me I'd never learn how to pronounce my
own name in English and she was right. (16)

In the second part of the poem, she discusses the fact that she has not been to a desert before, whereas in the first line of the first stanza, she says that she has lived in a desert, which shows her liminal state of mind because she has heard so many anecdotes of desert and their previous homeland that it seems to her that she had lived over there but in reality, she has not seen a desert. She also gives references to the bad touch by a boy, the starvation, and their stay in an old home. She contemplates that someday a man will love her because she belongs to the Midwest and perhaps, they will have to migrate to another place as it's the destiny of his father to be displaced again and again.

Hala Alyan presents a vivid and poignant account of the themes of displacement, identity, and search for spiritual meaning amidst chaos and loss in "Call Me to Prayer" from *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. The poem starts with a personal symbol of pain which is a cigarette burn on the poet's arm. This poem also creates powerful imagery in the minds of the readers. The speaker describes Beirut during a flood, with some garbage and wrappers floating through the streets. Then the poetess gives an example of a whorehouse, where a man advises her to go back to her home to her father. The whorehouse may be termed as a liminal place in this context because at this place people don't know each other still gratify the needs of others and then moves away, but at a place where people sell their bodies, the speaker gets a piece of advice for returning to her home. The man is sharing the pain of the speaker as he has faced the death and burial of three brothers on Muslim soil.

The poem continues with references to Jerusalem and El Paso, cities that repeat their own Bible names, and the image of towers and tunnels, possibly symbolizing journeys and transitions. The speaker then describes the contents of an exile's suitcase which suggests a sense of displacement and longing for home. The speaker says that the night wind and bees call her for prayer but she rejects the idea of prayer as she thinks that there is no God. The liminality lies in the statement when she refuses to accept the existence of God and in the same line, she confirms that there is God. Perhaps she is unable to find God in a foreign land of mountains, where people have come after evacuating their previous homes and which is having shrapnels and strip clubs. For her God exists only in her old country:

All night the wind muscles through the cypress trees, calls me to
prayer with the bees.

There is no God but God. This is mountain country, this is
evacuation country, this is land of American shrapnel and strip clubs.

No god but. (25)

Hala Alyan touches the theme of queerness and lesbianism too in her poetry. In the poem “Nineteen in Retrograde” of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, Alyan alludes to an incident of a girl's attraction and lovemaking at the age of nineteen. We can term this as a queer relationship. The queer people are liminal beings because they prefer partners of the same gender. They are neither abnormal nor normal in the eyes of common people. Although they have feelings like a common person their lovemaking with the same gender can't help them in reproduction and emotionally too, they are liminal beings. In this poem, the speaker shares some experiences of her late adolescent period like her going to church and lighting the candle for someone she loved, the

mistreatment by some white boys, her addiction to smoking to cope with the heartbreak, and her search for solace in the books of library and prayer to Saint Monica to whom she considers a patron of disappointment and alcoholism. Following this incident, she tries to mimic love with a girl and poses a question is it not that love because she makes love with a girl and goes to her home along with her? As she describes:

As if I had the right girlhood somewhere, turning the other cheek
only to later say I did, praying to Saint Monica. Patron saint of alcoholism
disappointment. Wives. Isn't mimicry love? My girl hand in her girl hand.
A foxhole between shaved legs. By the fire we made more fire,
kicked pebbles in to watch them spark and fluffed our hair
like trouble. You wouldn't kiss me anymore; what was I supposed to do?
(27)

Alyan gives references of cultural identity and belongingness under the guise of the word heirloom which means something that is valuable and belongs to a family for generations. The poem "Heirloom" of *The Twenty-Ninth Year* discusses the cord of Arab heritage, traditions and Faith in God, which the migrants try to maintain even in a foreign land. The poem touches on the pains of resettlement and changing identity along with the desire to return home and the scribbling of people on the empty walls that they would return to their homes. Present-day Palestine has been occupied by Israel where Hebrew is the official language of Israel and Arabic is used by the Arab minority. The speaker of the poem dives deep into the history of her family and informs the reader about two languages spoken by her grandfather, which are Arabic and

Hebrew. She claims that she is the predecessor of Mohammad and Salim. She tries to stay connected with the holy Quran. She has reached a liminal position in following her faith and religion because although she is reading the Suras she doesn't keep the Roza and she doesn't perform the Namaz. As she speaks her thoughts loudly,

My grandfather learned Hebrew because they learn Arabic. I am the
daughter of Nafez. The granddaughter of Mohammad.

The granddaughter of Salim.

I usher in each dream with Quran. Yes, Mama, I'm reading the suras
again. But I don't fast. I don't kneel. (65)

Hala Alyan employs several literary devices to explore identity, ancestry, faith, and cultural continuity in the above cited poem. The repeated phrases "The granddaughter of" exemplify repetition, emphasizing the speaker's strong connection to her family lineage and heritage. The references to Hebrew and Arabic create juxtaposition, highlighting the complex relationship between different cultures and the realities of coexistence and conflict. The statements "I am the daughter of Nafez" and "The granddaughter of Mohammad... Salim" function as symbolism, where family names represent ancestry, identity, and the preservation of cultural roots. The Quran and suras are also symbolic of religious tradition and spiritual inheritance. The contrast depicted in the ending lines, between "I usher in each dream with Quran" and "But I don't fast. I don't kneel." employs antithesis, revealing the tension between cultural identity and personal religious practice.

The imprints of Israel-Palestine conflict are indelible for the Palestinians, Hala Alyan discusses the permanent scars of war and loss in “Aleppo” in *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. The whole poem seems an anecdote of personal grief and the collective loss of a city. The speaker regrets that she should not love anyone because the ache of separation from a loved place or person is unforgettable. The speaker of the poem shares some personal experience by mentioning a fortuneteller's prophecy about the speaker's wedding to someone from Aleppo. She also shares a dream where the speaker's grandmother, depicted as a child, guides her to face a wolf which can be taken as a symbol of war's violence and fear. The poem then laments over the lost city, its people and the fading of cultural identity. She contemplates that Syria, which her grandmother is talking about is too old. Because now the place has been occupied by someone else, its name, its inhabitants and the buildings in it, everything has changed with its occupation by some other political power. A sad truth echoes through her poem that a single bomb can demolish a whole city and the existence of the people living over there:

The Syria in my grandmother is a decade too old. When she dies,
she will take it with her.

This is how a lone bomb can erase a lineage: the nicknames for your
mother, the ghost stories, the only song that put your child to sleep. (75)

She laments that all these incidents of violence, uprooting and displacement by her people will soon be forgotten and just become the bedtime stories for the children of coming generations. The citadel of the old city will be used to feed the birds and the Mosque will be turned into some project of art. She is pained at the thought that even at the time of the birthday of their Prophet they can't celebrate in a foreign place. The one who made people fight sleeps

peacefully whereas the common people face the aftereffects of war. But in this poem, the poetess is found at a post-liminal stage where she accepts the truth that although once they were free people, now their rights in that place have been snatched and they have only two options left, which are to, “Surrender. Or die” (75).

After analysing the poetry collections of Hala Alyan with the theory of liminality it's found that her poems are full of incidents of liminality. Most of the poems are in the form of personal narratives, where the speaker talks about her own or her known people's hardships and challenges of displacement. Her speakers are neither able to forget the past nor to completely embrace the future, they find themselves in a liminal position. The characters who are still unable to find out whether they are Palestinian or the inhabitants of a foreign land can be termed as liminal beings. There are liminal situations where the narrators of the poems can't decide, which choice they should make. The references to borderland, asylum and warehouses can be termed as liminal space. The references to queer love in the poems are examples of liminal relationships. Hala Alyan has also given frequent references to forgetfulness and Alzheimer's in old age which keeps the protagonist in a liminal position because they are still living in the imaginary world of the past which they can't find in reality.

The stories and anecdotes spoken by the first generation of migrants to their children have created a liminal world for the upcoming generations, as those places don't exist geographically in the present time because new towns and buildings have taken their places but the elders have narrated every detail of their lost land as an oral history. In this way the old Palestine and its towns like Jaffa, Nablus and Aleppo seem liminal places. The references to migration where people are moving from one place to another where they don't know can be termed as liminal passage. As those who are in the process of migration don't know what shall be

there for them in a new land and whether they will be accepted there or they will have to migrate once again; it shows their liminal journey full of ambiguity and uncertainty. Instances of a group of people shifting from one place to another in a group are perfect examples of *communitas*, as they all have been uprooted for the same reason and all of them are heading towards the same goal, which is to find a safe home for their families.

Hala Alyan has portrayed the liminal conditions and dilemmas faced by people in their everyday lives about their religious beliefs, cultural ceremonies, customs, food items, and prayers. The speaker of her poems finds herself torn between two forces, one force includes late-night parties, alcoholism, smoking, strip clubs, open sex culture, queer sexual activities and lack of faith on the other hand the other force pulls her towards the relics of lost land, the religious beliefs, Quran, Suras and Christianity. After reading the poems it seems that she is in search of solace and trying to find that both in Arab values and Christianity but still at a liminal position- which faith she should cling to. In this way, the poems of Hala Alyan are full of incidents of liminality.

Chapter-4

The Quest for Identity and Rootlessness in the Works of Hala Alyan

The present world is full of technological advancements, knowledge and information. It has become so easy to know about anything. The information about biggest incidents, happening and complicated details are available just with one click of the computer screens. The more human beings are getting to know the more they want to know. This insatiable desire for knowledge has raised questions about the identity of human beings. This raises questions like who they are and where they belong to. To answer such questions, one wants to know more about the identity, ethnicity, roots and other phenomena that define the overall personality of a human being. Hala Alyan explores the issues of identity crisis by Palestinian migrants living in various corners of the world with the marks of both Palestinian and Western cultures. Hala Alyan contemplates over the concept of her own identity as a Palestinian migrant settled in America and carrying influences of various cultures and the lineage of her family in her debut memoir, *I'll Tell You When I'm Home: A Memoir* in the following words,

I am a Palestinian American. My father was born in Palestine. My mother was born in Kuwait with Lebanese citizenship. My grandmother was Syrian. I spent my Childhood between the United States and the Arab World. I returned to this country for graduate school and fell in love: with the city, with a man. I thought I would go back, but it never seemed like the right time. Then it became the less possible. (19-20)

The concept of identity has ascribed so many meanings with time. In layman's terms, it can be defined as the identification of a person in terms of name, age, gender, physical structure address etc. But the concept of identity is not as simple as it has been taken because in various branches like psychology, sociology, philosophy, science, anthropology and theology, it has been defined in different ways. In ancient times a person was identified in terms of his physical structure. Psychologists define identity in terms of id, ego and superego; sociology studies it in terms of a person's relation with society; philosophy defines identity with higher principles; science and medicine identify a person by body mass, bones, blood group, height and weight; anthropology study identity in relation with the evolution of mankind and theology study in relation with God. In this way, various branches define identity in different ways:

Our present idea of “identity” is a fairly recent social construct, and a rather complicated one at that. Even though everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings.

(Fearon 2)

If we look at the dictionary meaning of identity, it is found that most of the definitions of identity are based on sameness or unique qualities that differentiate someone from others. As per Merriam-Webster dictionary identity means, “the condition of being the same with something described or asserted” and “sameness of essential or generic character in different instances” (Merriam-Webster). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, identity is, “the fact of being, or feeling that you are, a particular type of person, organization, etc.; the qualities that make a person, organization, etc. different from others” (Identity). Similarly, the Collins Dictionary defines, “The identity of a person or place is the characteristics they have that distinguish them

from others” (“IDENTITY Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary”). According to Linda Callaway the etymological meaning of identity has been derived from the “Latin word “identitas,” which is derived from the word “idem,” meaning “the same.” In Greek philosophy, the concept of identity was explored through the word “tauton,” which also meant “the same.” ” She further explains:

Throughout history, the meaning of “identity” has evolved, encompassing various aspects such as personal identity, social identity, and cultural identity. In its earliest usage, “identity” referred to the condition of being the same person or thing over time. It primarily denoted continuity and sameness. (Callaway)

James Fearon, in his famous essay, “What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?” classifies identity into two types which are personal identity and social identity. He believes that identity is constructed in society. He tries to trace the history of various identity theories and also elaborates on the psychological term “identity Crisis” given by Erikson. He accepts that it is really difficult to define or sum up identity in a few words, still, he tries to define identity by delimiting the term into two types which are personal identity and social identity. Social identity, “refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes” (2). He coins the concept of dignity and self-respect while elaborating the personal identity. As he remarks:

Personal identity is a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways and that (a) the person takes a special pride in; (b) the person takes no special pride in, but which so orient her behavior that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do

without them; or (c) the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to.

(9)

In this way both the concept of personal identity and social identity by James Fearon are associated with society. Social Identity Theory, introduced by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, suggests that individuals form part of their self-identity from the groups they belong to. The theory elaborates on the mental processes and societal factors influencing behaviors between different groups, particularly those involving prejudice, partiality, and unfair treatment. Social identity represents an individual's understanding of themselves, shaped by the groups they belong to. The social identity approach offers insights into group dynamics through examination of social surroundings, categorization, identity, norms, and status. It provides fresh perspectives on traditional subjects such as crowd conduct, stereotypes, social persuasion, unity, and division, emphasizing the psychology of collective experiences. Henri Tajfel and John Turner believed that in a social group one finds belonging, purpose, self-worth and identity (McLeod). The essay, "Key Concept: Identity" by Roger Willoughby provides a comprehensive definition of identity:

Identity is about who and what I am, and who and what I am not. This may be initially understood as an amalgam of many internal and external elements. These would include bodily experience, thoughts, fantasy and imagination, gender, class, race, ethnicity, multi-layered history, habitus, capital, one's jobs or roles, one's relationships, values, spirituality, future plans and aspirations. Central to our identity is our life experienced through our own individual consciousness, our sense of self, of 'I' and of 'me'. (54)

In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall elaborates on the topic of cultural identity and its representation. The essay examines the cultural identity in context with the

Caribbean cinema, with specific stress on the identity of black people. He highlights that cultural identity and diaspora carry political, historical, and personal significance at the same time. Stuart Hall talks about two perspectives of “cultural identity.” The first perspective is based on looking at things in a way that makes a group of people similar to each other:

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people'... (223)

This definition may raise many questions like identity cannot be limited to collective identity only because in a certain group, community or society all the people will not think and act in the same way. Individual differences will always be found in every group society or culture. The groups or communities might share commonalities in their past histories and lineages, yet their collective experiences as a unified group are always at a change due to the ongoing interplay of history, culture, and power. So, for answers to such questions, Stuart Hall has presented another perspective of cultural identity, which focuses on thinking about both the similarities and the differences in a particular social group. Hall believes that the second way is better because it helps us to see that identity isn't fixed or set in stone, on the other hand, it's shaped by history and society. Hall states that:

This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have

become... Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. (225)

Hall holds the opinion that cultural identity is continuously formed and transformed through historical, social, and cultural influences. Hall believed that identity develops through the interaction between personal experiences and broader social forces, including race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nationality. Rather than being stable or easily categorized, cultural identity is fluid, dynamic, and constantly evolving in response to changing circumstances and lived experiences. Mseer, Ismail Noori elaborates Hall's concept of identity in his paper, "Cultural identity theory; About the flexibility of identity and its transformation." He explains, "Hall contended that cultural identity is not something that can be easily defined or categorized. Instead, he suggested that it is fluid and malleable, constantly shifting in response to changing social conditions and individual experiences" (13).

In the present scenario of globalization and migration new challenges are being faced by people. With the advancements of multimedia and cross-country links it has become easy to dig the information about the history of a particular ethnicity and its roots, it has also strengthened the cross-country communication and exchange of goods. On the other hand, with wars, migrations and other reasons people have settled across the borders and settled all over the world. With the advancements in technology and means of transportation geographical distances are no longer bars for connecting, relocating and migrating. In such changed scenario, Hall believes that "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" (226).

In *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, Stuart Hall, writes that the stronger version of cultural identity is explained by ethnicity. For Hall, a strong version of cultural identity exists at a place that people feel deeply connected to. This connection goes beyond just location; it encompasses shared activities, a sense of living in a common world, and an entire system of meaning related to that place. This shared space is further strengthened by the idea of shared ancestry, often imagined through family ties and even physical similarities. When a group shares not just language and customs, but also, “ethnos, their sense of being bound to or belonging to the group is especially strong, and their version of cultural identity thereby becomes markedly confined and homogeneous as a result” (133). Hall believes that people's ethnicity, in this deep sense, is a cultural identity. Even though it's shaped by history and culture, it feels incredibly connected to a specific place and a shared ancestry. Over generations, living in the same area, sharing experiences, and having a common history have bound this ethnicity together. As a result, many people don't see it as something invented or created, but rather as a fundamental part of their existence in the same natural way as they perceive the world around them. As Hall comments, “Ethnicity in this strong sense helps us to imagine culture as being simultaneously “at home” and as “home” itself, the place where we originally came from, which first stamped us with our original identity...” (134). Rashid Khalidi expresses same views about the identity of Palestinian migrants in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*.

After 1948 the Palestinians in fact were to some degree integrated into the Arab host countries, whether socially, economically, or politically, as might be expected given the overlapping identities of the Palestinians with many of their neighbors. But instead of causing their absorption into these countries, the trauma of 1948

reinforced preexisting elements of identity, sustaining and strengthening a Palestinian self-definition that was already present. The shared events of 1948 thus brought the Palestinians closer together in terms of their collective consciousness, even as they were physically dispersed all over the Middle East and beyond. (22)

In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Judith Butler examines how collective identities emerge through public protests. Butler argues that political subjects are formed when people facing shared conditions of insecurity and precarity come together to resist injustice and demand more livable lives. These movements reveal that political agency, ethics, and solidarity already exist within society and shape how individuals understand themselves. Butler also emphasizes that identity is not fixed or isolated; rather, the self is created through relationships, alliances, and social interactions. As he writes, “, ‘I am myself an alliance, or I ally with myself or my various cultural vicissitudes’. They remind us that social relationality is involved in the formation of the ‘I’ and identity is not fixed” (68). In this sense, every individual is part of a larger collective, and identity is continuously shaped through connections with others rather than existing as a separate, stable entity. In the same book Butler expresses,

‘Politics is not distinct from the private one, but it crosses those lines again and again, bringing attention to the way that politics is already in the home, or the street, or in the neighbourhood, or indeed in those virtual spaces that are equally unbound by the architecture of the house and the square’ (71).

Scholars have examined identity through various lenses, including personal identity, collective or social identity, ethnic identity, diasporic identity, and hybrid identity. Despite these different approaches, a common understanding emerges, which affirms that identity is not fixed

or static. Rather, it is a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by personal experiences as well as social and political forces.

Hala Alyan's writings focus on the experiences of cross-country migration, re-location, displacement and the hardships followed by it. The characters she has portrayed in her novels and poems are facing a liminal dilemma, as they are unable to decide to which identity they belong. Usually, the first-generation migrants have a fresh memory of their past, but for the second generation it becomes a history of their parents and for the third generation its grip starts losing. The identity of Palestinian migrants on the Western land is liminal because neither they can fully accept to the new identity nor they can fully stick to their ethnic culture. Hala Alyan expresses her love towards her Palestinian identity and frequent visits to Lebanon in an interview by Grace Gordon in following words:

I think there's something about being somewhere where I can speak Arabic freely and hear the call to prayer. In the region, I think so many markers of home are shared, regardless of what city you're in. I also have such a place in my heart for the desert as a landscape. There's something about being physically in a place with the sun that I resonate with on a soul level. On a cultural identity level, if not home, it's home adjacent. I'm really looking forward to it.

Alyan's works are focused on the experiences of Palestinian migrants and their battle of settlement at various places. The forced migration of the people of Palestine due to the Israel-Palestine conflict and the wars along with the troubled life of the Palestinians and their struggle of settling in various locations forms the backdrop of Hala Alyan's works. The characters are suffering from rootlessness and identity crises. The pain of lost homeland and nostalgia has been contrasted with the influence of the environment. Some of them are carrying the influence of

both their ethnicity and present culture, whereas some have fully assimilated themselves into western civilization. As Hala Alyan expresses her views about her liminal identity in an interview with Simone Marie, ‘Two halves don’t make less than a whole, this too is a whole, it is just a different type of whole.’ Alyan further comments:

When one identity, i.e. American, literally doesn’t recognise the other identity or give it respect or space or advocate for its human rights, it is difficult,’ and this forces her to sit ‘in that tense, liminal space of not really knowing which flag to raise higher, which allegiance to feel stronger . . . it is very dialectical. They don’t feel like they complement each other.’ (Alyan)

Hala Alyan expresses her view about her identity in an interview by Grace Gordon, “Palestinians – my identity is not something I had to contest. It’s like, you don’t have to like Palestinians, but we know they exist. We’re not negating the fact that they’re there.” The analysis of the identity of various characters of Hala Alyan along with the speakers of her poem, will be done based on the theory of liminality. Those who have not accepted any value or culture of the place of their migration will be studied as being at pre- liminal stage; those who have neither forgotten their ethnic culture nor fully accepted the new cultural values and lying in-between will be studied at the liminal stage; and the those who have got fully assimilated to the new cultural values will be studied at post-liminal stage. The chapter entitled, “Identity in the Postcolonial Paradigm: Key Concepts” in the book ". *Exploring Cultural Identities in Jean Rhys’ Fiction*, studies identity with the theory of liminality as given below:

In his study on rites of passage, Arnold van Gennep identifies three stages at work in transitional events such as births, marriages, and deaths: separation (the periluminal stage), transition (the liminal stage), and incorporation (the

postliminal stage). While the passage itself involves an ambiguous threshold, the completion of a rite of passage establishes the individual's identity within a new social category or phase of life. (Cristina-Georgiana 11)

The separation, transition and incorporation of Palestinian migrants in the host nation and the hardships faced by them during the transitional period along with the effects of these three stages on their identity will be studied in the works of Hala Alyan.

Salt Houses by Hala Alyan portrays the story of four generations of a Palestinian family along with their multiple migration and dispersion to various places and countries. These migrations have left indelible marks on the identity of the migrants and their upcoming generations. The Yacoub family which used to live in Jaffa, had to migrate to Nablus in 1948 due to the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel. The novel starts from the year 1963 when Salma and her family have been living in Nablus for the last fifteen years, where her two daughters Widad and Alia get married and her husband Hussam dies with the pain of lost land. But during the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel took control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, the family had to migrate once again and Salma's only son Mustafa died in the war. Salma married off her elder daughter Widad to Ghazi who used to live in Kuwait and later on, Alia and her husband Atef had to take shelter in Kuwait in 1967, whereas Salma once again migrated to Amman near her cousins. Once again similar political strife, invasions and war made Alia and Atif flee from Kuwait too. Alia and Atif's eldest daughter Riham settle in Amman by marrying a Jordanian doctor Latif, the youngest daughter Souad marries Elie in Paris and their son Karam marries Souad's childhood friend Budur and settles in America. Later on, when Widad dies childless and leaves some amount for Alia's children. With that money Riham and Karam buy an apartment in Beirut. Souad too shifts to Boston after her divorce from Elie but

during the summers all of the family reunites in the Beirut apartments. The grandchildren of Alia- Abdullah, Linah, Zain and Manar witnessed the Gulf War from the Beirut apartments.

Identity is incomplete without a home and ethnicity but in this novel, the members of four generations are found struggling with identity crisis, rootlessness and transformation of identity because their homes and homelands are not permanent. The children of Salma associate themselves with Nablus but for the children of Alia and Atef, Kuwait is their home and they have memories and cultural values of that place. But the children of Souad and Karam who have been brought up in America, consider themselves American and feel out of place during their visit to Beirut. Hala Alyan has titled various chapters of the novel by the names of the various characters along with the date and place. The names of the places and the dates have been used as symbols to identify their identity and relocations. As the titles of the chapters are in the given sequence, “Salma (Nablus, March 1963), Mustafa (Nablus, October 1965), Alia (Kuwait City, December 1967), Atef (Kuwait City, May 1977), Riham (Amman, July 1982), Alia (Kuwait City, April 1988), Souad (Paris, August 1990), Riham (Amman, October 1999), Souad (Beirut, June 2004), Linah (Beirut, July 2006), Atef (Amman, June 2011), Mannar (Jaffa, September 2014), Epilogue (Beirut).” The identity of all these characters will be studied with the theory of liminality to trace the effects of the Palestinian struggle, wars, relocation, adjustment and nostalgia on their identity.

Salma and Hussam used to live in a villa at Jaffa and they had big farms with grooves of oranges and pomegranates. Hussam did not want to leave his country but when the grooves were set on fire they had to leave Jaffa, but he never remained the same happy man, he became a torn, sad, short-tempered man, always a sad and melancholic face who finally embraced illness. He used to cry, “They took my home, they took my lungs. Kill me, kill me” and he thought, “his illness was tied to the occupation of Jaffa” (3). He couldn’t digest the changing ways of his

children but Salma used to defend her children, “This is what our life is now, Hussam. The youth are scattered. There is what it is to live under rifle (16).” He died too early grieving for his lost homeland after migrating to Nablus. Salma too missed Jaffa badly and in the starting years she used to daydream about return but finally, the hopes of a return got shattered and she accepted:

The villa was gone, razed to the soil. The groves had been replanted and new workers picked the browned leaves, new owners baked breads with orange rinds. Still, her heart stirred when Alia, even at six, seven years old, spoke with reverence of a mythologist about the enormous Jaffa Pomegranates.... (7)

Salma tries to build a personal garden even in the infertile land of Nablus and years of struggle rewards her with the blooming of a beautiful garden with flowers. The garden can be symbolized as an effort to recreate a home and settlement. For a short time, the family settles too but the trauma still haunts her as she marries her elder daughter to an average person from Kuwait instead of a better professor who sticks to living in Nablus, because she thinks that Widad would remain safe in Kuwait. She has strong faith in Arab traditions like Coffee mug reading and throughout her life she veiled and remained devout to her faith. She even inspired her granddaughter who embraced the same veil and faith. Salma’s identity can be termed at the periluminal stage because although she shifts to Nablus and Amman, she does not transform her faith and beliefs an inch and the trauma of lost land and rootlessness so haunt her that even on her death bed despite remembering her dead son she remembers Palestine as she says,

You must remember.... When it happens, you must find a way to remember.... I was wrong. I thought I could make myself see something that wasn’t there. But it was a lie. I saw the houses, I saw how they were lost. *You cannot let yourself forget.* (141)

The war and the political turmoil not only devoured the homes and peace of mind of people it also devoured several lives like that of Mustafa. Mustafa was a loving son of Salma and a caring brother of Alia. He was a good friend of Alia's husband Atef. He was so handsome that other women were envious of Salma. He did not have a strong faith in God like her mother, "But he loves the mosque for its dusty smell, for the carpet prickling his feet, for the predictable hum of the muezzin more than anything celestial" (31). He loved Aya who used to live in refugee camps which shows the bad living conditions and poverty of the people living in camps they are so helpless that some girls like Ava had to indulge in paid sex for keeping both ends meet. Ava's family, "came from cities like Haifa and Nazareth. Their villages are lost, the names already eroded, replaced with new, Hebrew one" (33). He was an aggressive youth who wanted to protect his people and used to participate in gatherings held at the Mosque. Mustafa was greatly influenced by Imam Bakri who had been forced to leave his Palestinian home by the sea by physical torture of the males and sexual harassment of his sister in front of the whole family. Later on, the father of Imam Bakri could not bear the pain that he could not save his daughter along with the trauma of living far from the sea, the same sea which was the source of his livelihood and which he used to worship, "When he was died, he was buried beneath the hills he hated, far from the sea" (43). The story of Imam Bakri so influenced Mustafa that he started heading the gatherings at the Mosque and later got killed by the Israeli soldiers after extreme torture. Mustafa hates his father for not telling him such stories of Jaffa which can make him connect with the past. Mustafa is a liminal being who is suffering from rootlessness craves to find a connection with his past and is too aggressive to restore the rights of his people, the aggressive youth is egged upon by the people who want to take their revenge and Mustafa dies in the same liminal state.

Alia is the most stubborn among the three Yacoub children and the one who used to cry by remembering the oranges of Jaffa in her childhood. During the *Naksa* in 1967, she was in Kuwait as she was sent there to look after her ailing elder sister Widad. The hot climate of Kuwait was unbearable for her, “It was dazzling. She hadn’t known the sun could blaze with such violence, that air could be so blistering that even inhaling seemed an Olympian task” (51). She was counting the day of her return when the six-day war started and it devoured her loving brother Mustafa and her husband was not the same happy and expressive person throughout her life. She was forced to live at a place she didn’t want to live for a month as she says to her mother, “I didn’t realize the roads to Kuwait are one-way” (50). Even though she had to live in Kuwait she could not feel at home over there, she even wants shift to Amman near her mother and aunts but Atef denied it as he thought that the same old people would aggravate his pain but she used to spend her summers in Amman with her mother and always criticized Kuwait. It is hard for Alia to adjust in Kuwait and it makes her a strange short-tempered person with sudden mood swings even the parties and family gatherings couldn’t soothe her, a similar incident happened during a party at her home:

After the birthday song was sung, the slices doled out, alia fled to the bathroom, where she stuffed a towel against her mouth to muffle sobs. Their straggly, moping foursome; this awful country; pretending to be happy over saccharine cake- it was something to mourn over. (56)

Alia misses her home and life at Nablus a lot as she ponders over ideas, “Nostalgia is an affliction Like a fever or cancer, the longing for what had vanished wasting a person away. Not just the unbearable losses, but the small things as well” (74-75). She felt so traumatized in Kuwait that she accepted that she couldn’t become a good mother, her mood

swings continued throughout her life and as a result, three of her children were more attached to Atef than her. The liminality of her character can be traced when she doesn't like the wearing of the veil by Riham. She loves her land and faith but she is not devout like her mother and the embracing of faith by Riham pains her. She doesn't want her children to study in English school as she says, "So they can share their lunch with *ajnaib*?... and learn their ABCs? What for" (84). She complains to Souad and Karam for not teaching Arabic to their children and she scolds them by saying, "*You've raised the children as Americans. They barely understand what their grandmother is saying to them*" (242). She was a Palestinian daughter but three of her children got married to different places- Riham in Amman, Karam in America and Souad in Paris and her interaction with her grandchildren put her in a liminal position. The cultural assimilation and the use of multiple languages in Alia's family beautifully portrays Homi Bhabha's concept of hybrid identity. Homi K. Bhabha explains the idea of hybrid identity by relating it with 'third space' in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, as an in-between cultural space where the colonizer and the colonized interact and negotiate their differences. He argues that these interactions lead to the creation of hybrid identities, which are neither completely traditional nor entirely shaped by colonial influence. Instead of viewing identity as fixed or pure, Bhabha sees it as fluid, evolving through cultural exchange and negotiation. Third space challenges essentialist ideas of culture by questioning fixed identities and encouraging new ways of understanding cultural belonging. Thus, Bhabha presents cultural identity as a dynamic process that blends elements of the past and present to create new forms of identity. Bhabha elucidates,

Such act does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates

and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (7)

In *Salt Houses* during the last phase of her life, Alia had to relocate to Aman once again but the pain in her heart and her rootlessness became visible in her disease of Alzheimer which converted her into a liminal being, she started living in the memories of her home in Nablus, imagines the arrival of her dead brother Mustafa and she can't recognize her grandchildren which put her in a permanent state of liminality. Alzheimer's makes her relive her old identity and she is living in daydreams of Nablus and her wedding day but with the good memories the terror of war still haunts her as Riham says about Alia, "She says it's war. The Saddam is coming and she has to escape" (251). The Trauma she faced in her youth was terrorizing her in her old age too and the in-betweenness became a permanent part of her personality.

Some incidents and happenings give such an unbearable pain that the victim can't remain the same person. Atef is never the same person after the torture in the Nablus prison house and the death of Mustafa, consequently he has to take the help of a psychiatrist to come to his senses. As he explains to the doctor, "its like a shadow life... Like there's another me, and that I is still struck, like a skipping record" (79). Not only the mental trauma even the physical torture too lasted throughout their life as Atef could never recover from the stiffness and ache of the shoulder which was caused by a soldier in the imprisonment. *Naksa* robbed him of everything he had except Alia, it snatched his mother, his six brothers, his home, his job and his best friend Mustafa from him. The only way that could help him to recover from the trauma was writing letters which he used to address to dead Mustafa, sometimes he used to think that Mustafa was still alive and living in some remote corner of the world and his dreams haunted him, "*They never gave us a body, it's not impossible, lots of men left Palestine during those months, what if,*

what if” (83). The pain was not short it lasted for so long even after the birth of his three children his eyes got moist on the ninth birthday of Riham and he missed Mustafa and said, “*Mustafa, you should see the way they sang for her, Alia’s voice carrying above all the other*” (101). But he doesn’t know that once again he will have to relocate and his children will scatter in different corners of the world and they will yearn for Kuwait. The loss of Nablus and Mustafa haunts him till his old age and makes him a liminal being. As on the news of Alia’s sickness, he contemplates:

She is leaving him. She has already left him. The rage is like Roman candle lit from both ends. His mouth is dry. She is leaving him just as her brother did. His fingers sink into the soil around him and he think of Nablus. (269)

Alia and Atif’s eldest daughter Riham can be termed at the pre-liminal stage of identity transformation but after going through the liminal period of adolescent age she didn’t assimilate the Western values; on the other hand, she followed the path of religion shown by her grandmother Salma. She became a devout Arab and married an aged doctor with a son but she had the most stable and peaceful life in comparison with her siblings. Karam can be termed at the post-liminal stage as he accepts the loss of Kuwait as he tells Souad, “*Sousi. You can’t imagine what is like here. Everything’s gone*” (171). He is not a complex person he went to America and easily got used to the American way of living. But Souad who was a child with a stubborn and brave nature in childhood, struggles with an identity crisis. Souad goes to Paris for studies and realizes the value of his home and birthplace when she finds it lost, “Souad thinks of the map at the wall at her home. For the first time, she realizes sharply that it isn’t her wall anymore. The house is gone” (174). She decides to marry Elie not because of love alone, it is because she thinks that she will not have to leave, “And she feels not love but detachment, an

odd calmness as she watches him, as if she is appraising a house she's not sure she wants to live in. *I wouldn't have to leave*, she thinks. Her realization settles over her...". (175)

Marrying Elie was not the right decision, as Elie left her along with her two children Manar and Zain. She hated Elie for leaving her and loved them too; in her emotional turmoil, her children suffered a lot. Later on, she decides to settle in America near her brother Karam but that too can't provide solace to her. Souad thought that in Boston she would be free and would be able to start afresh but there too she faced discrimination and was labeled like a terrorist and she became aware of her liminal identity:

Souad became brown. People's eyes glazed over when she tried to explain that, yes, she'd lived in Kuwait, and no, she had never been to Palestine, but yes, she was Palestinian. That kind of circuitous logic had no place over there. (210)

She craves for home even in Boston and during the summers visits the Beirut apartments. When her children deny going to Beirut, she tries to convince them by saying that she wants to go home and defines home as "*Home is in somewhere familiar, somewhere people look like us, talk like us, where you guys can learn Arabic and be near your grandparents and never come home asking what raghead means*" (207).

The children of the fourth generation of Salma who are the grandchildren of Alia and Atef; can be termed at the post-liminal stage as Linah, Zain and Manar don't feel at home in the Beirut apartments. They yearn to go back to America and they have gotten used to the American lifestyle. They don't understand Arabic and are at a loss to know why war is taking place, why people are migrating leaving their servants behind and why the elders are glued to the Televisions and keenly observing the news of the warfare. But their identity is liminal when they

visit Beirut. A girl in Lebanon discriminates with Linah in Beirut calling her an offspring of Palestinians who killed her uncle but Linah is unable to understand that because she was born and brought up in America and she helplessly contemplates:

She wanted to say something about how she'd never been to Iraq or Palestine, that she knew only Boston and Beirut, that this was her home in summers, and Marie must be wrong, because whoever it was that killed her uncle, it wasn't Linah's *people*, whatever that mean. (230)

Initially, Abdulla is found rebellious and scornful toward the American siblings of her mother for their deviances towards Arab values, he is an angry young man like his dead uncle Mustafa but Atef and Alia answer his doubts and he easily assimilate with the hybrid ways of life. Later on, Linah marries an American and Manar visits Palestine during her pregnancy without marriage. But Manar gets disappointed over there, she even visits the place where her grandparents used to live but apart from that place, she cannot feel connected with other places. In this way, all of the characters of *Salt Houses* go through identity crises and rootlessness because of their multiple migrations and transnational visits. They don't have a stable place to call their home. All four generations have been expelled from their birthplace and the place where they spent their childhood. Their identity is liminal because they don't know where they belong to. Some identify with the identity of their ancestors, some with the identity of their birthplace, and some with the identity of their present location but they are liminal beings who are unable to find their identity and vacillate between their ancient cultural values and the culture of the present western locations. Mahmoud Darwish portrays similar liminal dilemma in his poem, "I Belong There" from *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, when he remembers his homeland and Palestine while living out of it, in the following words,

I belong there. I have many memories. I was born as everyone is born.

I have a mother, a house with many windows, brothers, friends, and a prison cell with a chilly window! I have a wave snatched by seagulls, a panorama of my own.

I have a saturated meadow. In the deep horizon of my word, I have a moon, a bird's sustenance, and an immortal olive tree.

I have lived on the land long before swords turned man into prey. (7)

The Arsonists' City is also a sort of life history of Idris Nassar and his Syrian wife Mazna. Idris was a Lebanese and Palestinian refugee woman named Hayat used to work for his parents Issa Nassar and Hana. Hayat used to bring her son Zakaria with her, who became a close friend to Idris and he was like a brother to Idris's sister Sara. The Syrian and Lebanese wars and the discrimination towards Palestinian refugees living in the miserable conditions at the camps have been put at the backdrop of the novel. Idris's other friend Tarek who is a friend of Idris directs some plays in Damascus because of the political turmoil in Lebanon and Mazna works as an actress in the same play. Tarek introduces Idris to Mazna and later on they start spending time together in Damascus and Beirut. When Mazna visits Beirut she falls in love with Zakaria who was also living at Idris's place that summer.

Later on, due to some previous conflict between Idris and Zakaria with someone, Zakaria gets killed, and Idris persuades the heartbroken Mazna to marry him and settle in America by showing the prospects of working in Hollywood. Idris seeks asylum in America and studies too over there and later on becomes a heart surgeon. But Mazna's acting dreams dash to the ground

and she starts working at a Greenhouse. They parent three children Ava, Mimi and Naj. Ava becomes a biologist and settles in Park Slopes, Brooklyn with her husband Nate who is also a migrant to from England to America and gives birth to two children Zina and Rayan. Mimi is living in a live-in relationship with Harp in Austin, he works at a restaurant and runs a band named Dulcet with some friends which is not a big success. Naj the youngest one lives in Beirut and she is a rockstar, she sings in a band named Noja which was formed by Naj and her friend Jo. The novel depicts the rootlessness and identity crisis of various characters in the American land along with the discrimination faced in the foreign land. The challenges faced by Arab children in America and their effects on their overall personality will be analysed in detail.

Idris Nassar was a loving son of Issa Nassar and Hana and a caring brother of Sara. He studies medicine in Beirut. Although he has applied to an American university for further studies initially, he is not willing to leave Beirut. He falls in love with a Syrian actress Mazna but Mazna falls in love with her childhood friend Zakaria who was a Palestinian refugee. The finding of the affair spoils the relationship of Idris and Zakaria and Zakaria goes back to the camps. Next week Zakaria gets killed in the camps and Idris can't bear this loss. He never told to Mazna that he knew about their love affair and in Mazna's broken state, he persuades her to marry. He settles in America but he has to face many discriminations in America. As Naj remembers, "Her father was the only brown doctor in the hospital for a long time; when he was first hired, people had been awful to him" (102). Idris goes to America against the will of his parents because he knows that the men who killed Zakaria they were after him on his mother's anger at their decision to go he says, "They want me to stay in that dead-end country. She's upset now, but it will pass" (311). Because he did not consider himself in his own country.

Idris tries his best to adjust in America and the death of his beloved friend makes him an alien to his homeland. On answering Mazna's question, of whether he misses his country, he replies, "I don't know if I miss Beirut." He sighs. "I work every day. And I like Eddie and the others. Anyway—Beirut feels dead. Doesn't it? After everything" (313). He misses his friend Zakaria badly and when gets the news of Mazna's first pregnancy he just cries. He wants to share his joys with his friend but he is no more and his dearth makes him cry even in his happy moments. Idris finally adjusts in America because he studies and works in the field of his interest, soon he starts believing, "He's in America and he believes in it, believes his wife will become a star, that the hospital will support him. That they will have a long, good life here" (314). Initially, Idris earns less and the family has to adjust to a small apartment and Mazna saves each penny, later on, Mazna starts working in a Greenhouse. But when Idris starts earning well, he wants Mazna to leave the job by saying:

Mazna, we're not immigrant students anymore. I make a good salary. We live in a good house. You don't have to work there. He'd gone on like that for years until Mazna finally replied, *I was never a student here. I will always be an immigrant.* (66)

Idris becomes a famous heart surgeon and whenever he operates or transplants human hearts, he talks with those hearts. He claims that once such a heart told him to sell their family's ancestral home in Beirut, he repeats the words, "Irdeh, sometimes we have to leave the past where it belongs" (102). Besides he wants to throw a memorial for his dead father. For that her sister scolds her and blames him for selling the house he just wanted to come out of his guilt and erase the traumatic past as she says, ". You were never going to sell the house; Sara told him that night in the hospital. You just wanted to believe you could. That you could erase the past like

that” (442). His fight with Sara starts when she comes to know that he is selling the house on the day of the memorial for his father. But when he looks at Zakaria’s mother Hayat the sudden pain of forty years of heartache gives him a heart attack and he resolves everything with Sara in the hospital:

His heart is healing with each beat; there will be a scar, invisible to everyone, but Idris will know it’s there, the dead tissue that will never regenerate. It will outlast him, with his memories and stories, his last delicious bite of cake.... The city stalks herself like a lioness. The city wants him to remember. The city wants him to forget. And so he does both. (443)

The concept of remembering and forgetting both on the same time depicts Stuart Hall’s concept of ethnic or neo-diaspora. Stuart Hall did not offer a final definition of identity, he suggested that its future lies in the condition of diaspora, where identities are continuously shaped by movement, migration, and cultural interaction. The research article, “An Analysis of Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity and Its Application in Flipped Class” by Bo Yang, Dan Zhao and Lu Liu depicts that according to Stuart Hall, the forced displacement of people from their homelands gives rise to what he describes as the ethnic or neo-diaspora. He explains that many earlier diasporic communities retained a strong sense of cultural nationalism and remained deeply connected to their ancestral homeland. These communities viewed identity as stable and longed to return to their place of origin in search of their cultural roots. As a result, they often remained emotionally and culturally attached to their former identity rather than fully embracing the culture and history of their host country. Hall argues that such diasporic groups tended to preserve their traditional identity, resist assimilation, and maintain a sense of separation from the societies in which they settled. As the Bo Yang et al. mention,

Hall sees the new ethnic diaspora as an ethnic group with an open mind. Their ethnic diaspora can create new identities, and they insist that differences and at the same time they also persist it. New communities can accept transformation, integration and change while preserving their unique culture.... Hall's study of cultural identity begins with breaking the definition of existing cultural identity, and he talks about breaking and multiplicity introducing cultural identity, which can help cultural identity to get rid of the binary model of non-black and white. (182)

In *The Arsonist's City*, Idris finally gets the answer that he belongs to Beirut too and gives up the idea of selling the Beirut house. He decides to give this house to the maidservant Mary, but Mary denies that she had been living there to fulfill the duty of saving the almond trees planted by his father and now she decides to go. Now both Idris and Sara decide to take care of the Almonds trees in turn. In this way, Idris gets answers to all of the questions related to his identity at his ancestral home. He stops running from the past and realizes that he belongs to this house and this country.

Mazna belonged to a poor family in Syria but she was an excellent actress. She wanted to study theater in London, her parents had consented to send her for her studies just before her love affair with Zakaria which completely changed her life. Mazna befriended Idris more because she was attracted by the trips to Beirut and the richness of her family but she was never in love with her. She fell in love with a Palestinian refugee and it changed her life. She couldn't bear the loss of his death and in the same broken state, Idris convinced her parents to marry her. But life in Blythe was too hard for her, she did want to return to Damascus. She felt lonely over there and it was really difficult for her to adjust to a new environment:

On the crosstown bus, the driver gets impatient with her counting out coins.

Another shopper asks her something, but she speaks too quickly and when Mazna doesn't say anything in return, the woman giving her a concerned look. In school, she was one of the best in English class, but hers is an English of movies and theater, not everyday conversation. (311)

She felt lonely and sad in America and wanted to come back but she couldn't because soon she came to know that she was pregnant with Zakaria's child. She wanted to teach but the chalk and classrooms reminded her of her drama classes in Damascus. Finally, she chooses to work in a Greenhouse because, "There's a sweet, coarse smell that reminds Mazna of the city gardens in Damascus, freshly cut flowers, soil and rain and salt. She's missed it" (331). Later on, she realizes why Tarek didn't want her to go to America as he says, "They'll cast you as an exotic woman, a terrorist. Here, you get to play everything" (132). Mazna had to compromise being a housewife working at a Greenhouse and she couldn't become an actress. She got an opportunity to get a small role but in the foreign land, and new atmosphere she felt her acting too stiff and unnatural. Later on, a common friend took her to a filmmaker and lured her into a sexual encounter in return for assuring a role in a film. She felt so broken that she was exploited just because she was a Syrian and filled with a guilt due to her Arabic upbringing:

The highway is endless, street lamps shining menacingly down at her. She recites Qur'an, then tries to listen to the radio. She screams once, loud, and then again, louder, and her face is so contorted, so ugly, in the rearview mirror, that she scares herself. (349)

Mazna had lived a life of fame and applause in Damascus. Everyone considered her an excellent actress and her teacher had recommended her to some Drama Schools in London. But

She ends up being a failure in America. Once she got a role but she lost that too, due to Idris. She was pregnant at that time and Idris lied to the producer that she had gone to Syria whereas Mazna had already aborted the child for the role. She laments over the dreams she used to take with Zakaria that they will move to London and seek asylum for him after that she will pursue her acting career but Zakaria's death changed everything for her. Mazna contemplates the cause of Zakaria's death and finds, "The men didn't go after Zakaria just because of the checkpoint, the dead boy. A Palestinian life is worth less than a Lebanese one. Even she knows that" (211). She feels suffocated and depressed in Blythe and her friend Kit persuades her to go for a hypnotism where she talks with Zakaria and tells him about the lost identity in America:

"You know what's in California, Zakaria? Mostly lettuce," she hisses. "Miles of it. And strip malls and taco stands and a shitty greenhouse where I spend most of my time. We're nowhere near Los Angeles, and even if we were, I'd never end up in a movie, because I'm shit at it." She loses momentum. "I'm not special," she says simply. "I spend my days watching cartoons. (352)

Mazna becomes a liminal being because at one point she hates Beirut on the other she wants to stay connected with it. She expresses her hatred for Beirut as she thinks, "Beirut is the cause of her sorrow. Without Beirut, no Idris. No Blythe. No Zakaria. The last always gives her pause, but she cannot imagine that he would be dead if she hadn't entered the picture..." (312). Mazna stops visiting it with passage of time and even couldn't go at the time of Issa Nassar's death but on the contrary of it, she doesn't want Idris to sell the Beirut house as she says, "Selling the only thing on Arab soil that still belongs to us? My parents' house is gone.... Beirut's all we have left, and just because I'd rather never see it again doesn't mean I want that house gone" (18). When Naj decides to go to Beirut for studies, she says, "We didn't leave a war

zone so our children could go back” (59). When she comes to Damascus during the summers she tries to criticize California but within her heart, she misses the country:

She misses it terribly. She lies because she feels obligated to, as though the truth would be worse: she misses the sanctity of the greenhouse, the neighbors who never meddle, the hours of solitude, all those people who expect nothing of her and so have nothing to pity. (361)

In this way, Mazna remains a liminal being and feels uprooted throughout her life and she cannot fulfill her dream of pursuing an acting career. Even after forty years, she cries silently in the plain for the death of her first lover Zakaria. She tries to keep her children connected with the roots but her eldest children end up marrying foreigners and the youngest one is a lesbian who returns to Beirut. Although by the end of the novel she reconciles with Sara and Hayat, she could never live a life of her dreams.

Zakaria was a Palestinian refugee and her mother Hayat used to work for the Nassar family. He had grown up playing in the courtyard of the Nassar family with Idris and Sara. When Mazna visited the Nassar house by that time Zakaria’s mother had stopped working over there due to her back ache but Zakaria used to live in the same house during the summers like a family member. Zakaria’s family had immigrated to Lebanon when he was a child, he remembers the memory of when his mother gave the news of lost land to him, “She cried. I still remember it. I was five or six; my father had just died. I was playing in the house, and she came in with her hands all dirty and said, Not a goddamn thing can be saved” (179). Zakaria lost his father in childhood and his mother brought him and his younger sisters to the camps but she often laments over the past and often whispers alone about it. Zakaria tells the same to Mazna,

He'd told her that his family was from Jaffa, that sometimes his mother whispered the name. If she forgot it, she would die.... He was Palestinian and lived in this camp. A refugee camp in Lebanon. He told me that if you forget the name of your land, that's when it's really lost. (334)

Zakaria used to work in a bakery and there too he had to face harsh remarks and discrimination once the soldiers entered the bakery and scolded the owner for hiring a Palestinian, "You hire Palestinians, Auntie? Plenty of honest Lebanese people looking for work." Further, they threaten Zakaria by saying, "'Palestinian vultures,' the soldier spits out. "Don't you have a bus to blow up somewhere, boy?" he asks Zakaria, who clenches his jaw" (66). People live in pitiable conditions in the refugee camps devoid of good facilities of water, electricity and sewage. Many people of Beirut hate them and criticize the government for giving shelter to refugees. No safety and security were ensured for the people living in camps as Zakaria was stabbed just near his house. When Mazna asks Zakaria about the camps he replies, "Nothing to see there, Damascus. Just four walls, like anywhere else. Smaller and dirtier, but it's just where people live. My mother always says the camps are where God forgets to visit" (188).

The short life of Zakaria depicts the pitiable condition of people living in the refugee camps. They have been sent away from their homeland and the people of the host land are also prejudiced toward them as Mazna describes, "A homeland he was born outside of. The camps are where Zakaria has eaten and slept and lived his entire life, a place she's never seen" (161). It seems as if the basic right of earning a livelihood, choosing a respectable livelihood, marrying a partner of one's choice and having kids has been snatched from the Palestinian refugees. When Ava meets Hayat, she is shocked to see the pitiable condition of the camps and with the contrasting surroundings, it seems to her as if two cities reside within Beirut. Zakaria was killed

for the crime in which Idris was equally involved but Idris had a long life. It was so because the life of a Palestinian refugee was of less importance in Beirut and it didn't matter to anything except his close relatives.

Ava was the eldest daughter of Mazna and Idris but in reality, she was the daughter of dead Zakaria. She was born and brought up in America and from the beginning gave the air of a foreign child to Mazna with her fluency in English and studious nature. Ava is darker than both of her parents and during the Parent Teacher meets, "Ava finds her mother too loud, too beautiful; her English is not fluent enough" (360). Despite the advice of her parents, she studied biology and chose an academic career. She married Nate who belonged to a prestigious family from England. Her mother often complains that her children Ryan and Zina are total foreigners to her as they can't speak Arabic, "It's one thing, Ava's mother has said many times, to marry an *ajnabi*, live in an *ajnabi* city. But to deprive your children of their heritage? It's a tragedy" (22). She feels guilty after the death of her grandfather for not attending the *azza* and for not taking her children to meet her grandfather. She gets nervous at the prospect of taking the children to Beirut:

Zina rattles on in English about beaches and toy stores. Ava feels a ping of guilt. When she and Nate take the children to visit her parents in California, Mazna insists on speaking to them in Arabic and harasses Ava for being a "fake Arab."
(21)

Ava has inherited the emotional turmoil of her mother. She found the photograph of a female co-worker in Nate's mailbox and gave the laptop to a random beggar in anger. Although they reconciled later on, she couldn't trust him afterward. When she goes to Beirut for the memorial, Nate lies that he is going to the Portland office but when Ava calls there, she finds a

female answering the call. She imagines that Nate is again cheating on her and in her anger takes drugs at a party with Naj and indulges in kissing and sex with Naj's friend Jo. But later on, she finds that Nate was in Brooklyn throughout the summers and completing his tasks. She cries badly and tells everything to her husband. Ava meets Hayat outside the Nassar house and finds out that she was an old housekeeper and mother of Zakaria who was an old friend of his father. Then she calculates that she was born seven months after her parent's wedding and decides to visit the camps. She finds her aunt Sara over there and comes to know the truth that she is the daughter of Mazna and Zakaria. Her whole identity becomes liminal with this truth and she wonders:

Her father is dead. Her father is a dead Palestinian who was killed in the camps, knifed like an animal. And her father, her father-father, the one who speaks with hearts and loves tiramisu, is a few miles away lying to all of them about why he's selling the house, the way her mother has been lying about Zakaria, the way everyone lies about everything. (407)

Even after knowing the truth, she fights a battle within her heart, as she does not know whether she should tell the truth to Idris or not, whether she should confront Mazna or not. But she does not know that Idris already knew about it, for him it was the basic concept of biology the dimple on her cheeks resembles the dimple on Zakaria's face and children inherit such a thing from one of their parents whereas neither Mazna nor Idris had it on their face. Mazna, Idris, Sara and Ava all think that the other doesn't know about the truth but everyone is in a liminal position because each one of them knows about the liminal identity of Ava and hiding the truth from the other.

Mimi is the second child of Idris and Mazna. Being a boy, he was always a favorite of his mother. He resides in Austin with his girlfriend Harper. He lives in a small apartment bought by Harper. He is going through an identity crisis and is not too good at anything. He works as a manager in a restaurant named Olive in Austin run by his friend Cordelia. He also runs a musical band named Dulcet but he spoils the band by kissing a female member named Allie who seduces him but he stops in between. Allie is going to leave Austin the next day and the kissing between her and Mimi is seen by Allie's cousin Jacob who decides to quit the band. In this way, Dulcet, the band of five members started by Mimi, falls apart. But during his visit to Beirut, he finds that he had been unsuccessful throughout his life because he was not dedicated and he should not be jealous of the success of her younger sister as an artist:

Devotion. Devotion like Harper listening to hundreds of recordings, like Ava writing a two-hundred-page dissertation about sea microbes. He suddenly knows in a flash, in his bones, that if she hadn't been successful in music, Naj would've found something else to devote herself to. (423)

Mimi has been living with Harper for a long time and he engages with her out of compulsion not because of his heart. Harper is truly devoted to him and loves him but Mimi is not sure of his relationship and future with her. But during his visit to Beirut, he finds that he truly loves her, he takes the engagement ring back from Harper because he wants to propose to her once again in a proper way. Mimi is jealous of her younger sister Naz because as a young girl of thirteen years, she surpassed Mimi in music. She tries to persuade him to sing with her but he denies it. But when they return to the Beirut house and spend time together, they fight badly and reconcile after shouting their misunderstandings out. During the show of Noja, Naj calls his

name from the stage and his parents push him towards the stage, while singing on the stage he realizes that he wants to start a restaurant where he will serve authentic Arab food:

He'll work in the kitchen this time. There will be *umm ali and mansaf* and freshly baked pita and he'll serve entrées based on the month, the way his grandmother used to. He won't paint shitty murals on the wall. It'll be simple Arabic food, and he'll cook all of it. There will be recipes on the napkins and he won't open in Downtown or Old West, but in Dove Springs, where the Arabs live, the Mexicans and Guatemalans. (425)

In this way, Mimi gets answers to all of his existential crises and identity issues in his homeland. It is his ancestral home that resolves his relationship with Harp and Naz. He explores his real identity in Beirut and finds that he will get solace in cooking authentic Arab food the way her grandmother used to cook. He accepts his real Arab identity and comes over the identity crisis he faced in Austen. No doubt he will return to America and once again start afresh by starting a new restaurant but this time he decides to stay connected with his roots and true identity.

Naj is the youngest daughter of Idris and Mazna her full name is Najla Nassar. She had a passion for music ever since her childhood and the music teacher of Mimi who had been giving lessons for him for a long time got mesmerized by Naj's playing of first not on the violin. Which made Mimi angry with her sister. Naj surprises her parents with her decision to study music in Beirut, but they can't stop her from this reverse-migration. In Beirut, she finds that she is a lesbian and seriously loves a Syrian friend Fee. But when Fee's brother comes to know about the affair, he takes Fee with him from Beirut and badly beats Naj which gives her several fractures. Later on, Naj forms a band with her friend Jo and names it Noja which proves a big success.

Although Naj lives in her apartment yet the whole of Beirut seems to her like a family and the death of her grandfather shakes her badly:

But there is something blank and yawning within her that's grown since *Jiddo's* passing; it's like she's been shaken loose from a safe branch.... Since his death, everything feels painfully exposed. Her hungover afternoons and morose moods, the way she dislikes women after she sleeps with them—she is aware of it all, like a smell she can't identify the source of. (82)

Naj's band was a success, people liked their duo on stage and they had a very good understanding. Naj always wished she would be straight and marry but she couldn't do it. Naz is going through an identity crisis. She is a lesbian but it is too difficult to tell the truth to her Arab parents, she fights a battle with herself by hiding her true identity, "Naj'd had a fantasy when the band first started of being some sort of lesbian vanguard of the Arab world.... She couldn't tell her fans before she told her parents" (87). But the union with family in Beirut home gives her the strength to share the truth with her siblings and it also helps her to resolve the conflicts with her brother. She came here to live near her grandfather and couldn't return even after his death. It seems as if she wants to safeguard her roots and her Beirut Home and when her father and her aunt Sara decide to look after it, she plants for a reverse migration:

Noja will eventually die—all bands do—but she's okay with it; they'll find a way to fix things, to meet- in airports and for Christmases and children's birthdays. But first Los Angeles. First an actual first. The reverse migration of her family. She'll return, for the second time in her life, to a place made of her. She'll look out at the same desert as her mother... (435)

In this way, all the characters of The Arsonists' City go through an identity crisis and all this starts with the death of Palestinian migrant Zakaria. If Zakaria had not have been Mazna and Idris wouldn't have to spend their life in the remote deserts of America, and they wouldn't have to fight the battles of adjustments in in a foreign land. Nor do their children would have to fight between their Arab origin and their American origin. But all of them get answers to their existential questions and dilemmas, once they reach their homeland. The visit to Beirut home and the Arab culture of living together helps them to resolve their identity crisis with the help of their family members. Edward Said mentions the same identity crisis and rootlessness in his *Reflections on Exile*, "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal" (186).

The struggle for existence and acceptance in a new country under the guise of a new identity is shown in the poem "Scarlet O' Hara at the Nightclub" from Atrium which opens with a new identity of the speaker who is flaunting her newly waxed legs from her short dress. She says that she would prefer to take gin to forget the ruin which is traumatising her. She alludes to the wars which made her ancestors dislocate but it seems as if she is pretending to forget all the painful past by getting lost in the hip-hop music of the nightclub. Perhaps she is trying to silence the noise in her mind by focusing on the noises around her. Then by alluding to the hungry cats, she conveys that in the rented apartments, no one cares about their hunger and if they can't provide rent, their place is taken by others. Further, she gives references to smoking cigars, rapes and wives who are mere sex objects. Women are getting ready in the bathroom of the nightclub and standing in front of mirrors because these external looks that they are polishing

in front of mirrors will bring food to their plates. The speaker says that she met someone only with her bones because her soul and conscience remember only the fog and the dead moon. In this way the speaker depicts her identity crisis and lost identity under the guise of modern clothes and the sounds of Western music:

I am told there had been a war, two,
 Seven, but cannot hear well over the hip-hop-
 Trance music. I ripple like water.
 The room I Rent at the motel overlooks
 Hungry cats.... (18)

Identity has been termed transitional which keeps on changing with a person's personal, professional and social experiences and the influence of the surroundings but sudden and forcible displacements put a permanent scar on the identity of a person. Hala Alyan's poem "Rehearsal" from *Atrium* explores the profound impact of displacement on people of Palestinian origin. It acknowledges the difficulty of leaving behind a familiar home and settling in a new, unknown place. Alyan portrays this struggle through the speaker's memories. On their first day in this new location, the speaker, likely a child, cries barefoot on the terrace. This moment captures the raw emotions of loss and uncertainty. However, the poem also hints at a more unsettling fear. The speaker imagines a future where they must leave again, mirroring the family's history of displacement. The poem portrays a constant worry about their safety and a lack of a permanent home. There is no certainty and permanence in the life of these migrants and the trauma of displacement and fear of ongoing dislocation have become a part of their personality. Due to

multiple migrations and lack of any sort of stability their liminal identity gets prolonged. As Alyn says:

Four weeks from now'

I will board a plane in a

New winter coat. My father

Stamps out the cigarette

and clears his throat. I am safe.

In a moment, he will speak. (48)

The migrants and diasporic population always face a struggle between the old identity and the new identity. The title of the poem, "Palestinian-American," from *Atrium* in itself, highlights the speaker's dual identity. It suggests a sense of being in-between, neither fully Palestinian nor fully American. The poem throws ample light on the liminal identity of Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The speaker openly acknowledges her ethnicity that she is a child of a Palestinian refugee and confesses to her love for another city. She speaks up proudly about her Arabic origin and mourns the loss of her homeland and the traditions and customs associated with that place like the ceremony of applying henna, which is an inseparable part of Arab weddings and other rituals. Being raised in America the speaker of the poem longs for a connection with her roots and equally grieved for not being accepted in the new country where she is merely a child of a refugee. The poetess is hinting towards the permanent liminal state of the millions of refugees who are living in the camps without any citizenship and basic

rights either in their homeland or the host land. This means they are constantly on the threshold, never truly belonging anywhere. This state of liminal identity is being transferred to the upcoming generations of refugees as well. The "liminal cry of lost land and displacement" echoes through the speaker's voice,

I love the jaws of another city.

Daughter:

of refugee?

Mourn the silhouette-

Self, the hennaed version.

Arable girl. (53)

The idea of the complex identity of a person shaped by multiple migrations has been taken up in the poem, "Push," of *Four Cities*. Hala Alyan names so many cities from all around the globe like Gaza, Beirut, New Orleans, Boston, and many more and accepts that each of the cities has left a mark on her. It shows that her constant movement has not created a sense of belonging to a single place but to all of the places at the same time. Through the poem, Alyan speaks about the influence of each place on her identity. She expresses sorrow for Gaza, love for Beirut, gratitude for Ramallah's acceptance, and a strong connection to Baghdad that evokes tears even after twenty-six years. She believes that only Jerusalem can understand her full potential. The poem highlights a liminal state of in-betweenness as she belongs to every place and no place simultaneously. Alyan seeks forgiveness from Gaza, and wishes to share her whereabouts with. The act of asking for forgiveness from a place she's left behind, while

appreciating aspects of Western cultures, reflects the in-betweenness of her identity. She doesn't want to abandon her roots, but also embraces the cultural and geographical realities of her present which makes her a liminal being:

Norman, Oklahoma. No one calls me Holly anymore.

Brooklyn. Sixty-two books and mistakes. You showed me

Where to sit. *Dublin.* Someday. *Damas-*

cus. Nothing is as dangerous as unlit match. You taught us that.

Paris. By beauty I meant bridge. My brother's legs over the

water. *Jerusalem.* Only you know what I am capable of. (10)

The migrants tend to change their external looks and lifestyle according to the culture and lifestyle of the place they live in but they try to stay connected to their faith and religious beliefs. The poem "Dinner" by Hala Alyan from *Four Cities* juxtaposes the daily routine of life with serious questions of faith, identity and lost land. The speaker of the poem confesses that she wants to wake slowly as she is in search of a man who is a true devotee of Islam. She gives references to "wudu" which is performed before the prayer by the Muslim community. The speaker is yearning for God. In the later part of the poem, her thoughts shift toward the vegetables and the marketplace. She starts giving the minute details of the foods and the way she likes them to eat. The speaker also mentions some dishes like Baguette and Sangria. But all of sudden once again the loss, rootlessness and diasporic trauma haunts her when her thoughts focus on the falling lights and the coffins lying in the junk yard. The speaker is found intentionally occupying her mind with random thoughts to forget the pain of lost identity and

fear of weakening faith but once again the same thought haunts her mind and she misses the place of her origin and recites names of some cities named Gaza, Alexandria and Damascus, like a prayer. Her quest for her true identity, connection with someone who can enlighten her and the search for God has been depicted in the following lines:

I want the slow awakening, the life of marveling,

to follow a man down a dark hallway, watch him dip

his, face his neck, into the water, flicking it over his

wrists. I want God, I want God. To bury myself

towards the swarming. (47)

The sudden loss and dislocations caused by war, deaths and other natural calamities don't let the sufferer accept the reality, sometimes such sudden shocks lead to mental disorders and malfunctioning of the brain too. The poem, "Marketplace" from *Four Cities*, portrays the struggle of displaced Palestinians and their next generations. Cultural identity is always tied to the homeland, its culture, and history and it gives a sense of belonging. Forgetting this connection from the homeland is an impossible task, especially when the expulsion is violent and unjust. Even the memories of the happy past become a source of pain and it constantly reminds them about the land, culture and ethnicity which they have lost. Over time, the inability to return and the broken ties to their homeland aggravate their pain. They desperately search for anything familiar, anything that connects them to their homeland in their new surroundings. The speaker

of the given poem longs for a bus that could take her back to lost towns of Palestine like Nablus, Hebron, or Jaffa. Hala Alyan uses the speaker's futile search for places that no longer exist to portray the identity crisis and rootlessness faced by displaced people. Their constant yearning for a home they can never return highlights their profound sense of loss and disconnection from their cultural identity. The speaker's actions portray the ongoing struggle to maintain a sense of self when the foundation of that identity means their homeland, has been taken away. As Alyan portrays the diasporic cry:

I ask for

Gaza, and a woman ushers a

Piece of bread in my mouth.

...

I ask for Nablus. I ask

for Hebron. I ask for Jaffa. (82-83)

It becomes hard to forget the past when it is better than the present. Similarly, the memories of happy homes and settled lives of Palestinian Migrants haunt their minds in their new lives full of dislocations, hardships and existential crises. Hala Alyan's poem, "Loving the Remains" from *Four Cities* deals with the same idea of identity crisis and rootlessness of the immigrants who have been displaced from their homeland. The speaker longs for a lost land, a place symbolized by Andalusia and a vibrant city filled with cultural richness. The speaker tries to search for the fragments of the lost homeland but faces the harsh reality of loss. The poem captures the complex emotions of displacement, grief, and a determination to hold onto the

cultural heritage that defines them. The speaker is giving a reference to coffee grains in this poem, in Arab tradition coffee is a symbol of hospitality and certain rituals are related to it like the custom of coffee cup reading described in Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses*. However, the speaker is unable to trace the hospitality and the beautiful traditions of his homeland in a foreign land. The speaker is immersed in the memories of her homeland's beauty but can't experience any sort of belonging in the new environment. The comparison of cities to helmets highlights the struggle to maintain a cultural identity in a new, unfamiliar place. The poem depicts efforts of searching for meaning in a foreign language and the feeling of rootlessness and the constant struggle to build a new identity. As it has been written in the poem:

No coffee grains scattering into
 an immigrant's fortune, we wear
 Our cities like helmets. We are
 thieves, filching language
 for it pearls, groves, farewell. (90)

When people are uprooted all of a sudden and have to leave their homes, lands and other belongings behind, it becomes difficult to adjust to a new place especially when the cultural background is different than that of the culture of their homeland. Such hardships of the dislocated community have realistically been portrayed in the poem, "Hijra" from Hala Alyan's poetry collection *Hijra*. The poem portrays the poignant account of the troubles faced by the migrants. The poet calls the migrants sleepwalkers who have to leave their homes behind and flee for survival after the gunfire. They had to struggle to keep themselves alive and to make both ends meet. Sometimes they had nothing for food except ash and the women had to do the

menial jobs. Some of them became seamstresses and witnessed the departure of people from their homes. They had to struggle for shelter as the poetess refers to the childbirth in the caves. In this way, the identity of civilized human beings who had been living happily with their families turned into the vagabonds who had to strive for their existence and basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. The new and fresh start of life makes their identity liminal as they have to start afresh by learning and adapting to the new ways of life in a new place. Their hardships and efforts to form a new identity have been portrayed in the following lines:

We became seamstress, mapping departure

Into our eyelids, Allah's calligraphy stitched

Our vertebrae. We wrote their unsaid names

on parchment, buried them in boxes, gave birth

to our daughters in caves. When our breasts wept

milk for months, we drank it ourselves. (15)

The ethnic identity and memories of the past stay safely buried in the hearts of the migrants and it hurts them badly when they are forced to live far from their original homes, nations, culture and surroundings. The Poem "Seham" from *Hijra* explores the connections with ethnic identity as the speaker starts the poem by giving minute details of the prayer rug of her father. Further, she elaborates on the borders of the prayer rug which shifts her thoughts towards the lost land and over time the changed borders. The names of old cities and places are kept as

armors by them. These names are a reminder of their past, their heritage, and a sense of belonging that was ripped away. Further, the speaker delves into the difficulties followed by war and displacement. The difficulties of managing life in a new land, the difficulties to survive and the difficulties to find a new land turned even their ribs into compasses. The poem highlights the resilience of the characters, who try to hold onto their past despite so many challenges and uncertain futures. The mentioning of the prayer rug, which is a symbol of her cultural identity fills the heart and mind of the speaker with loss and nostalgia:

Sit and I'll tell you of my father's prayer rug,

dark as plums with yellow borders'

borders like the map we ate, grit tangled

between our teeth, the years swelling

like one hundred arrows. Here,

have some stew, taste June in the steam. (22)

The contrast between the life in homeland and in the place of migration has been depicted in the poem, "In the City of Fire" from *Hijra*. The speaker conveys that with time their old abolished homes have been left behind by them and in a new land they are living in high buildings. They are mourning over the decay of their old city and homes. The new country has made them tough as they had to fight many battles with starvation and other odds. The decay of old cities, homes and religious places has so much grieved them that its loss seems a loss of their

prophet to them. The pain of a lost city is like a smoldering volcano for the inhabitants who had to leave their city. The old maps and atlas are useless now because now the boundaries have changed but still the maps are kept as relics by the people who used to live in Palestine. The stories and anecdotes of those places are being repeated like holy psalms. In this way, the speaker of the poem wants to stay connected with the roots and the ethnic past in the form of oral history. Here the past is not merely the account of historical details, this past is a part of their identity and a safeguard of their ethnicity. As the speaker expresses:

We tell them the prophets have been dead for ages,

The flags crumbled in the riots.

Our hands fill like volcanos at the dying cities,

but we tore the atlas into psalms. (42)

A human being is a product of both heredity and environment; one can't stay unaffected by one's surroundings and the popular culture. Such a journey of identity transformation of a migrant woman has been described in the poem "Step One: Admit Powerlessness," of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. The speaker expresses her love for a transient paper gown and calls her body discarded. Someone is giving her condoms and she is not calling this sexual encounter rape because she believes, "a tree can't be killed twice" (32). Although the displacement has caused so much physical and mental torture upon her, she declares that the X-ray of her body will find God inside her abdomen. She confesses that her mother did not like her to board a plane or go to America but she did it. The migrants are not always easily accepted by the host land and they have to face so many discriminations and prejudices; similar things happen with the narrator as

she says that she took the things that were not her. She has to go through an existential crisis along with the battle with hunger and shelter.

Finally, she chooses whatever way she can find to keep herself alive in a foreign land. The girl of Arabic origin who was so dear to her father has ascribed a new identity in Nevada, who is in touch with rich and pretty boys. She thinks as if her body has been renamed and she is chasing the boys like some other girls. The ending lines of the poem describe her new identity when the speaker says that she has started believing in another god. Her transformation from the Arabic identity to the American identity can be traced in the following lines:

Arabi-girl, baba-girl. Rich boys, pretty boys, tell the

boys as angry as Nevada, to own a thing you must want it.

Out in the cold night I was a body renamed, emerging from a sea

of white girls, my hoodie too thin, veins blue as hydrangeas,

laughing with the Columbia boys on Morningside,

chasing one tallboy with the other. (32)

The theme of an individual's struggle with lost identity and religious beliefs followed by guilt has been taken up in the poem "Common Ancestors" of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*. The speaker of the poem is found in a state of confusion and she wants to redefine herself as she makes her way through a life full of turmoil. She compares her life with a ship lost at sea. The speaker grieves over her inability to speak Arabic and mourns the loss of her grandmother and the traditional foods she used to cook. She is filled with nostalgia at the thought of her last day in Beirut. The speaker talks about her liminal identity when she says that it seems to her as if she

had been born twice, once she was in Beirut and the other when she was in America, “hard and sober, steel piercing nose/lips/belly” (35). She is also learning the Voodoo from an African woman. The speaker is not alluding only to the change of language and clothing with the migration and dislocation; the cultural values and ethics have also gone through a complete change with this displacement. She talks about her visit to the homes of white boys who introduce her to their mothers and where she takes spare undergarments which refers to her sexual relationship with those boys. She admits that she has completely changed and adapted to the Western lifestyle, but still, there is guilt and pain within her heart for drinking on the day of Eid and for forgetting her religious belief system. That is why she calls herself a convert and laments:

I forgot that Zaynab came before Fatima. I drank on the first day of

Eid.

From roof to dirt, say hallelujah, say hallelujah:

I’m a convert now. I’m a land waiting for my new, westerly name. (35)

Home is not a place of shelter only, home is a place where all of the family lives together and nurtures it with lots of love, compassion, dreams, shared experiences and togetherness. When the same home and the homeland which had been a symbol of so many shared experiences, cultural activities, traditional performances and ethnicity is forcibly snatched off the ache lasts throughout life and the memories of that home are passed as heritage to the new generations. “Halfway to July” is a poignant reflection on the themes of lost home and lost identity in Hala Alyan’s book *The Twenty-ninth Year*. The poem paints a picture of a place called Heaven’s intersection, a metaphor for the crossroads of life where one’s roots and connections to

the land are questioned. The reference to dry grass and a crushed beer hints towards a sense of loss. The speaker's thoughts move from various escape routes to the genetic ties to her father. The protagonist admits to losing the bullet, a sign of letting go of the past or perhaps the desire to be questioned. The act of birds attacking a house until a woman emerges is a powerful image of disturbance and the need to confront what is hidden. The ending lines of the poem are:

Every time an officer asks my name I lie.

Have you heard the one about never going home again? The morning
always rises on that awful house and the birds cry and you call me girl
and I let you. (13)

The recurring theme of deception and loss is portrayed in this poem. The speaker of the poem is unable to tell her real name as she doesn't find her true self in a totally new place. The closing lines of the poem question the possibility of returning home, suggesting that the concept of home has changed for them and now it seems unattainable. The morning light on the house, the crying birds, and the acceptance of being called 'girl' reflect a resignation to an imposed identity and the loss of one's true self. The poem deals with the internal conflict and the search for belonging at a place where her roots and identity seem uncertain and fragmented

The novels and poems of Hala Alyan are full of incidents and characters where Palestinian migrants are found struggling with rootlessness and identity crises. Both of her novels and poems stress the link between past and ethnic culture. Both of her novels are in the form of family history and the roots lead back to the lost land and lost cities of Palestine and

Syria. The first generation of migrants is found traumatized and unable to accept the loss they don't want to transform themselves, so they are at the pre-liminal stage. The second generation of the migrants is found grappling with the identity crisis. Neither they are fully Arab nor American. The second generation is at the liminal stage as they are children of Arab migrants and parents of children living in the Western world. They have faced the hardships of adjusting to a new country, with people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds along with children who seem alien to them in their behavior and lifestyle. The third and fourth generations of migrants can be termed post liminal stage because they have adopted the language, culture and lifestyle of the host nation.

Hala Alyan has written narrative poems that depict life incidents full of hardships, displacement, trauma and adjustment. The portrayal is full of realistic imagery which has the power to connect us with the sufferers. It seems as if Hala Alyan has portrayed the stories of the life of various people, especially the women who have faced the trauma of war, migration and exodus on their bodies and minds. Their pangs of nostalgia and diasporic cry put them at a liminal status. Some of them believe that forgetting their ethnicity and culture will be a sin and they are adamant about not changing themselves according to new ways of life, they are at the pre-liminal stage because they have refused to go through any transition. Examples of people searching for buses that could take them to old cities and Alzheimer patients who imagine themselves in Palestine are examples of the pre-liminal stage of identity. Those who are trying to keep their past alive in the form of participation in religious and cultural practices along with adapting to the lifestyle of the Western world are liminal beings. Their identity is at the liminal stage because neither they have fully detached themselves from the past nor they have fully assimilated the new values. The children of migrants who are the third generation may be termed

at the post-liminal stage of identity because their connection with the past is too less in comparison with their inclination towards the Western value system.

The Palestinian crisis has created the feeling of rootlessness and identity crisis among millions of the Palestinian migrants. Most of them are still living in camps who are not sure where is their home and where do they belong. The present state of violence and wars has once again created the danger of losing their homes and insecurity of lives. There might be political reasons or conflicts but the common people have suffered the most and the pangs of that pain has transcended up to the upcoming generations of the Palestinian migrants who don't know where they truly belong to. They are still in a liminal state and searching for the answer to a long lingering question where they truly belong. The Palestinian Migrants don't have an answer, to who they are, because many of them are still living in refugee camps with the hope of return and the others are lying in a liminal state.

Hala Alyan has given references to the lost land of Palestine, cities like Nablus, Jaffa and Ramallah may be termed as her endeavors to keep the ethnicity and past of Palestine alive. Various characters in the novels and poems have glorified the rich heritage and cultural values of the lost land. Alyan has beautifully portrayed the feeling of rootlessness and identity crisis of the Palestinians who have been uprooted from their previous homeland. The adjective Palestinian-American with the name of Hala Alyan itself defines her liminal identity, same is the liminal identity of the characters of her novels and poems.

Chapter 5

Hala Alyan and the Idea of Resistance, Assimilation and Cultural Hybridity

Leaving a homeland and making a new home in a new country is not an easy task. It is not only about making a physical home and physical displacement. Settling in a new geographical location brings so many challenges with itself. One doesn't leave a home only, with a home a lot of cultural practices, languages, traditions, foods, attire and connections are left behind. The migrant community has to face the battle of adjustment to a new climate, cultural surroundings, language, food and environment of the host nation. With these battles the behaviour of the host community with the migrants also adds to their challenges because not all societies welcome the migrants in their nations, some are hostile towards them and some are indifferent. To study such dilemmas of the characters of Hala Alyan in detail the chapter will discuss the elements of resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity.

Resistance is the act of resisting or defying authority, control, or standard practice. It can take various forms, ranging from individual acts of disobedience to organized movements that challenge and transform society structures. In the social sciences, the idea of resistance now includes a wide range of acts and behaviors that challenge and oppose dominant power structures, beliefs, or policies. This includes both apparent actions, such as protests and revolutions, and more subtle ones, such as cultural and social opposition. In English literature, resistance includes using literary works to address and condemn dominant ideas, power structures, and social injustices. The resistance literature often draws attention to disadvantaged community issues, criticizes oppressive systems, and provides multiple viewpoints that empower

oppressed people. Resistance literature can take many forms, including novels, poetry, essays, and plays, and it commonly takes on issues such as colonialism, racism, gender injustice, and political oppression. Resistance literature is an effective tool for social and political change because it raises the voices of those who are frequently exploited.

The concept of resistance in literature was first popularized by Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani. He used the phrase to denote writing that actively opposes and criticizes systems of authority. Kanafani's articles generally focused on the challenges and resilience of Palestinians living under occupation. As Kanafani writes, "With respect to the literature of resistance in occupied Palestine, however, it is necessary that the Arab reader in general and the Palestinian emigrant in particular study its persistent continuation..." (11). This concept was further developed and brought to the limelight by literary critic Barbara Harlow in her influential book, *Resistance Literature* (1987), where she examined how literature can function as a means of political resistance.

Kanafani addressed these themes in a 1970 interview with journalist Richard Carleton, where he responded to questions concerning the purpose, legitimacy, and necessity of Palestinian resistance. Throughout the interview, he articulates why Palestinians continue to resist, arguing that resistance is not merely a political strategy but an essential response to dispossession, occupation, and the struggle to preserve their identity, dignity, and national existence. As he comments,

The Palestinian resistance movement did not give the Palestinians in the camps better food, it did not give them better clothing, it did not give them cement houses, but it gave them something which attracted "their loyalty, and that is the hope of a dignified life after an arduous struggle to regain dignity and to build

their society. This is simply the reason why the Palestinian masses living in the camps gave their loyalty to that resistance movement, which only promised them a very late, better life. But not on the spot.”

Resistance literature frequently discusses problems like gender inequality, liberation movements, and the challenges faced by exiled writers. These works serve as a kind of protest, advocating for social change, preserving cultural identities, and empowering those who have been silenced or ignored. In the present scenario, the term resistance has got broad meaning, “Resistance studies in turn are meant to stand in for a great deal of interdisciplinary work being done these days within and across the social sciences, history, literature, cultural studies, and so forth” (Ortner 173). Resistance literature raises voice against the subjugation. It portrays the grievances of common masses. Resistance literature serves as a true picture of socio-political condition of common people. It becomes the voice of powerless and oppressed people. As Achille Mbembe describes the hardships of Palestinians in “Necropolitics” in following words,

To live under late modern occupation is to experience a permanent condition of ‘being in pain’: fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; curfews that imprison hundreds of thousands in their cramped homes every night from dusk to daybreak; soldiers patrolling the unlit streets, frightened by their own shadows; children blinded by rubber bullets; parents shamed and beaten in front of their families; soldiers urinating on fences, shooting at the rooftop water tanks just for fun, chanting loud offensive slogans, pounding on fragile tin doors to frighten the children, confiscating papers, or dumping garbage in the middle of a residential neighborhood... (39)

The paper, “Palestinian Resistance: Reflections on Violence and the Right to Resist,” by Nijmeh Ali contends that Palestinian resistance should be understood as a sustained and long-term struggle rather than a temporary response to isolated incidents. It argues that this resistance has been shaped by decades of oppression, settler colonialism, and the continuous pursuit of justice. The study further aligns with the field of settler-colonial studies, which offers an important theoretical framework for interpreting the persistent processes of Palestinian dispossession and the enduring nature of Palestinian resistance. “The article further argues that resistance for Palestinians is not merely political but existential: a praxis of survival, dignity, and refusal against structures of erasure” (1). Everyday acts of Palestinian resistance challenge systems of domination while helping people survive under occupation. These forms of resistance often become the subject of political and academic debate, especially when they involve the use of violence. Rather than viewing resistance solely through legal or strategic frameworks, this paper argues that, for Palestinians, both armed and non-armed resistance represent an existential necessity rather than a voluntary political option.

For Palestinians, resistance is neither a distant political theory nor an abstract debate – it is a lived reality woven into their everyday lives and actions. It manifests in armed fighters, street protesters, farmers refusing to abandon their land, women rebuilding their lives after every demolition, and countless other forms of refusal. (4)

In the postcolonial scenario, postcolonial critics studied resistance in relation to the colonizer and the colonized, where the colonial authority exploited the colonized people while the oppressed people attempted to fight their power by various means. It could be violent or quiet opposition. In the Introduction to his book *Postcolonialism and Resistance*, Jefferson explores

the term resistance in a postcolonial perspective. In this book, he investigates the most common explanations of resistance in postcolonial studies. He investigates resistance as a dualistic phenomenon that includes both the fall of colonial authority and open rebellion against the colonizer, breaking binary thinking and challenging the fixed identities imposed by colonial knowledge systems. He also provides an alternate perspective, proposing that resistance should be seen as a form of transformation. As he states,

For some, resistance signifies little more than the failure of colonial power to be total; indebted to psychoanalytic and post structural literary theories, resistance, as mimicry, hybridity, or the ambivalence of colonial power, subverts the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge. For others, drawing upon the theories of anti-colonial intellectuals, resistance constitutes organized political and military struggle against colonial rule and the structures of the colonial economy. (3)

Resistance has been studied by Bill Ashcroft in his seminal work *Post-Colonial Transformation* defines resistance as any type of defense that prevents an invader from gaining authority. He believes that this term includes subtle social and cultural forms of dissent, which are particularly difficult for imperial powers to overcome. He adds that the term "resistance" is commonly used in postcolonial discourse and third world politics, and it is frequently associated with images of war, such as violent revolts and heated speech. However, Ashcroft questions if the traditional notion of resistance as violent or intellectual rebellion is the only correct interpretation, and whether it overlooks forms of opposition that can effectively drive social change:

Ultimately, ‘resistance’ is a word which adapts itself to a great variety of circumstances, and few words show a greater tendency towards cliché and empty rhetoric, as it has become increasingly used as a catch-all word to describe any kind of political struggle. But if we think of resistance as any form of defence by which an invader is ‘kept out’, the subtle and sometimes even unspoken forms of social and cultural resistance have been much more common. (20)

Resistance, as discussed in Uday Chandra's article “Rethinking Subaltern Resistance,” highlights the complex nature and ambiguities of subaltern opposition to dominant social institutions. He believes that the meaning of resistance, “too broadly stretches the concept to the extent that it includes ambiguous or ambivalent acts in everyday life” (565). He emphasizes that, rather than viewing resistance as a complete rejection of authority, it can be viewed as a technique of mediating or opposing power without yielding to exaggerations or stereotypes. This redefined approach helps our comprehension of various types of political conflict, including both little acts of defiance and large-scale protests or revolutions, all within a unified logical framework. He believes that, “Resistance, in this sense, ought to be recognised as a vital part of a critical realist ontology of society, which helps us understand and critique existing structures of social domination in order to pursue emancipatory possibilities via the generation of social scientific knowledge” (563).

Resistance can be defined as any form of opposition against any person, ideology, power structure or ideology. Resistance can be violent or non-violent like the non-violent movements of Mahatma Gandhi. Any action, thought, ideology, decision or opinion can be opposed or resisted by a single person, by a group of people or by a whole community. The works of Hala Alyan portray the resistance of the Palestinian migrants who have been displaced from their homelands.

There are some references of violent struggles and the atrocities too, faced by the Palestinians and her works prove an apt example of resistance literature by portraying the realistic image of the people who have faced the trauma of exodus. But Hala Alyan has used resistance as a form of remembrance in her works.

The effects of the exodus on the upcoming generations of migrants and the emotional turmoil faced by them and their offspring are the major themes of Hala Alyan's works. But when the migrants settle in a new place, they interact with different cultures, traditions, languages and socio-economic structures. When the migrants are in the minority, they try to assimilate new cultural values or sometimes the policies of the host nation forcefully try to enforce their culture, languages and value system upon the migrants. But the children of these migrants reflect the cultural hybridity because they bear the influence of both the native culture and the culture of the host land.

Assimilation is a process in which two persons, groups, cultures, parties, or entities come into touch, resulting in the integration of the weaker party into the stronger one, typically at the sacrifice of the latter's distinct identity. This involves taking on the dominant culture's characteristics to the point when the assimilating group becomes unidentifiable from the rest of society. "Assimilation is a process in which two individuals, groups, cultures, parties, or objects come in contact and the one with a weak back or base merges in the strong one losing its own identity (Sindhu and Singh 33)." Assimilation can be voluntary or forceful, but it generally implies some degree of loss, whether of language, traditions, or different ways of life. Individuals may assimilate in order to acquire social acceptance, economic possibilities, or political influence, but this typically comes at the cost of eradicating or reducing their true cultural identity. Assimilation does not imply "racial" or biological fusion, but such fusion can

occur. Despite its some unpleasant features, assimilation is a key factor in shaping national identities and social unity, frequently serving as an indicator of belonging in diverse cultures. In sociology, cultural assimilation refers to the process by which an ethnic minority begins to accept the majority group's ideas, languages, and customs, typically at the expense of their cultural identity. Susan K. Brown, Frank D. Bean discusses various models of assimilation in the article “Assimilation Models, Old and New: Explaining a Long-Term Process.” They define assimilation as,

The process by which the characteristics of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another. That process, which has both economic and sociocultural dimensions, begins with the immigrant generation and continues through the second generation and beyond. (1)

J. W. Berry classified assimilation into six types: Color assimilation, Cultural assimilation, religious assimilation, Linguistic assimilation, Psychological assimilation, and Statistical assimilation. J. W. Berry noted that the impact of interaction between two cultures occurs at both individual and group levels. Cultural assimilation occurs when people or groups combine with a more dominant group, which frequently results in the loss of their native culture as they adopt the dominant culture. Berry emphasized that assimilation is a component of a larger process known as acculturation. Many people confuse assimilation and acculturation, although acculturation refers to the entire process, whereas assimilation is a specific stage that immigrants may experience throughout acculturation. Berry also provided two common theories of melting pot and pressure cooker relating to assimilation:

When people choose to Assimilate, the notion of the Melting Pot may be appropriate; but when forced to do so, it becomes more like a Pressure Cooker. In

the case of Marginalisation, people rarely choose such an option; rather they usually become marginalised as a result of attempts at forced assimilation (Pressure Cooker) combined with forced exclusion (Segregation); thus no other term seems to be required beyond the single notion of Marginalisation. (10)

When the immigrants are unable to fully assimilate into the new socio-political or cultural scenario and they bear the influences of both their native culture and host culture then arises the cultural hybridity. The concept of hybridity spans multiple disciplines, initially, it referred to the mixing of different species, but over time, its meaning has expanded beyond biology to include the fusion of cultures, identities, and technologies. The term "hybridity," which was at first used in science, is now used to refer to the blending of cultures too in the postcolonial era. In simple words, cultural hybridity can be defined as the blending of two or more cultures, values, and lifestyles. "Cultural hybridity, the fusion of cultures and coming together of difference, the 'border crossing' that marks diasporic survival, signifies change, hope of newness, and space for creativity" (Mirza 16).

The concept of "hybridity" has been related to the writings of Homi K. Bhabha. As Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture*, "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibilities of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4). Bhabha believes that the "Third Space of enunciation," is that space where all cultural expressions and frameworks are produced. Bhabha regards the idea of a hierarchy of cultural "purity" as imaginary because cultural identity keeps on going through continuous changes. As per Bhabha's opinion, acceptance of this ambiguous area of cultural identification may help to transcend the originality of cultural identity and it can help one to become conscious of the prevalent hybridity in which cultural diversity functions.

According to Bhabha, the colonial authorities employed hybridity to translate the identity of the colonized people into a single framework. According to him, a hybrid identity results from the relationship between a coloniser and a colonised person; if a new identity is brought about as a result of their interaction, that is a hybrid identity. He states that “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibilities of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 4). Homi Bhabha uses the term "hybridity" to define the connection with multiple cultures. Although, the mixing of the cultures creates tensions, it also helps the diasporic people with collective identities to move from the old traumatic experiences of dispersal, migration, and marginalisation. In the views of Bhabha, “This hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no, primordial unity or fixity” (175). The concept of hybridity equips all the displaced people with new perspectives and ways of thinking. “A Study of Cultural Hybridity and Liminality in the Works of Hala Alyan” defines the term as “Cultural Hybridity denotes the mixing of two cultures and birth of new culture with the admixture of two” (Pandey and Limba 1253). In today's context, hybridity plays a key role in postcolonial, multicultural, and globalization studies, offering valuable perspectives on how identities are shaped and renegotiated through historical power dynamics and cultural interactions:

The importance of hybridity in postcolonial contexts, arguing that it facilitates the emergence of new cultural forms and practices that challenge established hierarchies and binaries. This perspective underscores the role of hybridity as a site of resistance and innovation, where the interaction of diverse cultures leads to the creation of new meanings and identities. (Yasmin and Ahmad 14-15)

The instances of Hybridity, Assimilation and resistance will be traced in the works of Hala Alyan in this chapter. It will be studied that in the initial phase, the Palestinians resisted leaving their homeland and when they were forced to migrate their resistance took the form of everyday resistance where they tried to resist the influence of the foreign culture. But to get acceptance and survival in the foreign land they try to assimilate the new cultural values. But when they are neither able to fully assimilate nor able to fully detach from their roots, then emerges cultural hybridity. The novels and poems of Hala Alyan will be studied to trace the elements of resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity. The chapter can be further divided into three parts:

- a. Elements of resistance in the works of Hala Alyan
- b. Elements of Assimilation in the Works of Hala Alyans
- c. Elements of Cultural Hybridity in the Works of Hala Alyan

Elements of Resistance in the Works of Hala Alyan

Resistance is a common theme in Hala Alyan's works, showing itself in personal, cultural, and political situations. Her characters resist the gradual loss of identity and memory, especially in the face of displacement and exile, as they try to maintain their cultural roots while handling new situations. This resistance is also seen as disobeying societal expectations. Alyan's poems and novels usually defy the grief of war and relocation by emphasising resilience and self-reclamation. Whether via intimate contemplation or social memory, her novels and poems depict resilience in the face of suppression, loss, and displacement. Alyan expresses the idea of resistance in *I'll Tell You When I'm Home: A Memoir* in the following words, "Somethings need to be erased to be replaced with a shinier, reinvented version. Only self can't be fully erased. It

just gets buried, a grave beneath a grave, a skeletal hand poking through the dirt of your own interment. Never gone. Never disappeared. just dormant” (10).

Hala Alyan has portrayed resistance at three levels in her works. Her works depict the instances of violent resistance and silent resistance by disobeying the authority, along with this Alyan has used resistance in the form of remembrance. Her characters have been shown embracing their ethnicity and cultural roots. She has deliberately used the names of Palestinian places, cultural practices, ethnic cuisines and Arabic words to support the idea of resistance in the form of remembrance. It's Alyan's style of resistance where her ethnicity can't be erased even by the multiple migrations, displacements and traumas.

In order to analyse the elements of resistance literature we can compare Hala Alyan's works with great Palestinian writer of resistance Ghassan Kanafani. In *Returning to Haifa*, Said and Safiyya, a Palestinian couple displaced during the 1948 Nakba, return to their former home after the 1967 Six-Day War. They discover that their abandoned son has been raised by a Jewish Holocaust survivor, Miriam, and is now Dov, an Israeli soldier who identifies with Israel rather than his Palestinian heritage. The painful reunion reveals how identity is shaped by history, upbringing, and political circumstances rather than biology alone. Realizing that their personal loss reflects the broader Palestinian experience of displacement, Said concludes that reclaiming homeland and identity requires responsibility, resistance, and active struggle. Motivated by this understanding, the couple supports their younger son, Khalid, in joining the Palestinian resistance.

I'm looking for the true Palestine, the Palestine that's more than memories, more than peacock feathers, more than a son, more than scars written by bullets on the stairs. I was just saying to myself: What's Palestine with respect to Khalid?... And

yet for him, Palestine is something worthy of a man bearing arms for, dying for....
 That's how we differed and that's why Khalid wants to carry arms. Tens of
 thousands like Khalid won't be stopped by the tears of men searching in the
 depths of their defeat for scraps of armor and broken flowers. (187)

In *Salt Houses*, Hala Alyan also portrays the same relocation and forced migration of Palestinians, which Ghassan Kanafani, mentions in his works of resistance literature. Alyan addresses resistance on various levels, with characters dealing with emotional, cultural, and political conflicts spanning generations. Throughout numerous generations of a Palestinian family, the novel's characters suffer displacement, war, and existential difficulties. The story spans various decades and locations like Jaffa, Nablus, Amman, Kuwait, America, Paris and Beirut, demonstrating how each generation encounters distinct kinds of struggle, yet resistance to loss, occupation, and loss of identity is constant. Hassam and Salma, the head of the family, are displaced from their home in Jaffa during the 1948 Nakba means the mass exodus of Palestinians. At first, they resist to leave their home but when their farms were burnt and Palestinians were tortured, they had to leave. But he became a changed person at Nablus and used to lament, "They took my home, they took my lungs. Kill me, kill me" (3). Salma too fiercely resists forgetting her homeland, even as her family is forced into exile in Nablus and later Kuwait. Though she is rooted in her traditions and reluctant to accept the changes occurring around her, Salma resists the upheaval of her family's life by clinging to cultural rituals and maintaining an attachment to her identity as a Palestinian woman. She tried to create a garden in Nablus similar to her garden in Jaffa but she had to leave from their too. Even on her death bed she remembers her homeland and wants her children to remember their roots. As she says, "You must remember.... When it happens, you must find a way to remember.... You cannot let

yourself forget” (141). Her action signifies her resistance to the erasure of her family’s history and her refusal to accept permanent exile.

Salma’s son Mustafa, became politically involved and joins resistance movements during the 1967 Six-Day War. He is inspired by Imam Bakri who told him the story of the forceful exile of their family and the rape and other physical torture of the females of his family. Mustafa’s involvement in anti-occupation activism represents a direct form of resistance to Israeli occupation. His choice to fight for his homeland reflects a desire to reclaim Palestinian land and identity, even at great personal cost. His tragic death in the war serves as a turning point in the family’s history. Mustafa’s close friend and brother-in-law Atef can’t bear his loss and needs medical help to tolerate this pain. Atef’s habit of writing letters addressed to the dead Mustafa can also be termed as his style of resisting and refusing to accept reality.

Salma’s daughter Alia, represents a more complex and conflicted form of resistance. She is the central figure in the Yacoub family, who witnesses the displacement of her family due to the 1967 Six-Day War. After being displaced from Jaffa and later Kuwait, Alia tries to resist the idea of living in her stay in Kuwait but she could not convince her husband. Although she lived in Kuwait but she never felt at home. Neither she could become an ideal mother nor she could share the bond which they shared with their father. The last phase of her life when she suffers from Alzheimer and imagines herself living in Nablus depicts her pain. Through her memories of Palestine and forgetfulness about the present surroundings Alyan supports resistance in form of remembrance.

Alia’s daughter Souad, represents a more modern form of resistance. Growing up in Kuwait and later moving to Paris, Souad actively rejects the traditional Palestinian expectations imposed on her by her family, particularly around marriage, gender roles, and modesty. She

rebels through her romantic relationships, lifestyle, and choice to live independently abroad. Souad's form of resistance is deeply personal assertion of her individuality against the weight of her family's expectations and cultural traditions. Riham contrasts with her younger sister Souad's rebellion by seeking refuge in religion. Unlike her sister, Riham resists the influence of Western lifestyle her family has adopted by immersing herself in religious observance like her grandmother Salma and wearing a Hijab. Her decision to wear the hijab and live a devout life is a form of resistance against both Western influence and the more liberal choices of her family. For Riham, her religious devotion is a way to reconnect with her Palestinian roots and resist the pull of assimilation into the cultures they are constantly moving through.

Another significant form of resistance is demonstrated by the younger generation, particularly by Alia's grandchildren who seem to be attempting to assimilate into the Western world where they have grown up, rejecting the stories of loss that define their family. Souad's daughter Manaar represents a more modern form of resistance. She rejects the older generation's desire to forget or suppress painful memories, instead seeking to confront and engage with the history of their displacement. This is seen when she returns to Palestine to reconnect with her roots and understand her family's legacy. As Manaar mentions, "I'm in Ramallah, she marvels to herself. This is Haifa. Her pang of Palestine had always been an amorphous thing. It was a hat rack for all her discontent. But suddenly Palestine is real" (282). Her journey to Palestine is an act of defiance against the erasure of identity and history, a rejection of the tendency to move forward without addressing the trauma of the past.

Throughout *Salt Houses*, resistance is portrayed not just in large, political gestures but in the quiet, everyday decisions of the Yacoub family. Whether it is through the act of remembering, preserving traditions like coffee mug reading, making traditional food items on special

occasions, or asserting their right to reclaim a sense of identity. Alyan's characters resist the forces of exile, displacement, and erasure that threaten to overwhelm them. The novel's exploration of resistance is deeply tied to the themes of memory, identity, and the ongoing impact of the Palestinian diaspora, showing how the Yacoub family members resist both external pressures and internal struggles as they navigate their complex histories.

Hala Alyan's *The Arsonists' City* is a poignant exploration of resistance in the face of trauma, displacement, and familial secrets. Resistance in Alyan's works take many forms, ranging from the characters' inability to forget their history to their determination to find new paths at the time of adversity. The theme of resistance is deeply intertwined throughout the life of each character in Hala Alyan's novel *The Arsonist's City*, representing their struggles with personal, familial, and societal restraints. The novel, situated in Beirut's turbulent history, examines how each character's resistance influences their identity and relationships.

The novel's central theme is resistance, which emerges as a sort of memory, and refusal to let the past be erased or forgotten. The Nasr family coming back to Beirut, which serves as both a place of loss and a potential ground for regaining identity. Idris, the head of the family, tries to detach all of the ties from Beirut by selling his ancestral home. He thinks that he has moved on from the past memories and he gets well settled in America. But he himself didn't know that he couldn't sell the Beirut House and the cutting of the almond trees planted by his father hurts him. By the end of the novel he realizes that he can't snap his connection from his roots and he resolves to take care of the Beirut House and his father's almond trees. In this way his character depicts resistance in form of remembrances and connection with his ethnicity and cultural roots.

Another main character of the novel is Mazna the wife of Idris. Mazna reflects resistance through her defiance of traditional gender roles and societal expectations. She was born in

Damascus; she dreams of becoming an actress. She befriends Idris during her stage shows and her secret trips to Beirut, stays at the home of Idris before any relationship with him, her lovemaking with Zakaria, hiding the fact that Idris is not Ava's father, signifies her rebellion against the constraints of her marriage and societal norms. Mazna's decision to marry Idris and move to America after Zakaria's death is a form of resistance against her grief and the limitations imposed by her circumstances. Although despite so many attempts to pursue an acting career in America she ends up becoming a worker at Greenhouse, her efforts to preserve her identity and pursue her dreams reflect her resistance. Mazna's efforts to teach Arabic and cultural values to her children is a beautiful example of her resistance against cultural assimilation. As once she cooked fatayer for her kids and said, "This is how your grandmother used to make it," she told Ava, and she'd felt pleased with herself raising Arab children so far from home" (361).

Ava, the eldest daughter of Idris and Mazna is struggling with her husband Nate's infidelity, she fights with the expectations of forgiveness and maintaining the idea of a perfect family. Ava's travel to Beirut and her desire to understand her parents' history is an act of rebellion against the secrets and lies that have defined her life. Her act of lovemaking with Jo is a sort of resistance to the infidelity and lies of her husband, she resists the orthodox notion that a woman should forgive the mistakes of her husband on the other hand she commits the same mistake in order to take revenge from her husband.

Mimi, the middle child, defies the demands of conformity and success. As a musician, he is torn between the pressure to make a reputation for himself and the guilt over his previous mistakes. Mimi's resilience is shown in his refusal to accept a regular existence and his pursuit of his passion for music, despite difficulties. His guilt-driven proposal to Harper, as well as his subsequent decision to leave his band, highlight his inner anguish and struggle with society

standards and personal shortcomings. By the end of the tale, he resists all of his family's expectations and rejects the effect of American society as he resolves to build a café where he would serve traditional Arabic culinary items that her grandmother used to cook. As he contemplates, "He'll work in the kitchen this time. There will be umm ali and mansaf and freshly baked pita and he'll serve entrees based on the month, the way his grandmother used to..." (424). Mimi finds answer to all of his existential crisis in his homeland and the memories of traditional Arabic foods paves way towards his future plans of opening a restaurant. The youngest daughter, Naj, represents resistance through her sexuality and artistic expression. As a lesbian, she feels isolated from her family and society. Naj's resistance is manifested in her refusal to submit to heteronormative standards and her pursuit of a music career in Beirut. Her connection with Fee, as well as her struggles to convince her family to accept her for who she is, illustrate her search for acceptance and identity. She fights the impact of her western upbringing by moving back to Beirut from the United States for education and a music career.

A central theme in the novel is the survival of the characters despite their struggle to reconcile their personal histories with the broader political and social turbulence that surrounds them, as Ava finds out the secret that Zakaria the Palestinian refugee who was killed in camps was her biological father. Hayat comes to know that her dead son has a daughter who is being fathered by Idris. A meeting and reconciliation with Mazna along with Ava's connection with Zakaria shows a hope to aged Hayat that apart from her someone else also exists who belongs to her dead son. Sara makes her brother Idris realise that he was trying to erase the traumatic past by selling the Beirut house but in reality, he won't be able to sell it. As she says, "You were never going to sell the house, Sara told him that night in the hospital. You just wanted to believe you could. That you could erase the past like that" (442).

In this way, *The Arsonist's City* portrays resistance as a multifaceted and deeply personal struggle for each character. Through their defiance of societal norms, familial expectations, and personal limitations, remembrance and reconnecting with the homeland, its culture, values and traditions. The reconnection with Beirut by the major characters depicts the resistance in the form of remembrance.

In literature, poetry is more than an artistic form; it serves as a powerful means of expression, resilience, and resistance. This is especially true in Palestine, where poetry has long reflected the experiences of occupation, displacement, exile, and the struggle for identity. Through their poems, Palestinian writers preserve collective memory, challenge oppression, and affirm their people's existence despite repeated attempts to erase their voices. This role has become even more significant in light of the ongoing violence in Gaza since October 2023, as illustrated by Refaat Alareer's poem "If I Must Die." The poet was killed by Israel's air strike few days after writing this poem. But the poem powerfully expresses courage, hope, and resistance in the face of destruction,

If I must die,
 you must live
 to tell my story ...
 so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
 while looking heaven in the eye
 awaiting his dad who left in a blaze
 and bid no one farewell

not even to his flesh

not even to himself... (26)

Hala Alyan's poetry collections, *Atrium*, *Four Cities*, *Hijra*, and *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, frequently explore the theme of resistance as depicted in Refaat Alareer's poem "If I Must Die". Her works delve into personal, political, and cultural forms of resistance, reflecting her experience as a Palestinian-American woman facing multiple identities, histories of displacement, and the trauma of conflict. The act of writing about Palestine and the diaspora is itself an act of defiance, refusing to allow these stories to be forgotten or erased.

In *Atrium*, resistance appears to be personal and emotional, as the speaker struggles with the struggle between displacement and recollection. The series depicts the battle to maintain cultural identity in the face of exile, with the act of remembering as a form of rebellion against erasure. The use of Arabic language and characters in contrast with Western society and nightclubs increases the impact of the poet's struggle. The speaker rejects both the grief of dislocation and his desire to assimilate, preferring to live in the space between cultures. In this book, resistance is subtle but persistent, rooted in the preservation of memory and selfhood. The reference to the tradition of coffee mug reading is an apt example of resistance as remembrance in the poem "Medusa" of *Atrium* where the speaker says:

When she peered into my coffee cup,

The fortuneteller saw rivers,

Said I must learn

To quiet myself.

All I could see was the bitter of coffee

Left behind in my mouth. (29)

Four Cities deals with resistance on a more political and geographical level, focusing on the cities of Beirut, Baghdad, Amman, and Damascus. These cities, shaped by war and conflict, have become symbols of resistance and survival. Alyan uses rich imagery and personal recollections to oppose the demise of these locations, depicting them as both fragile and resilient. The poems refuse to allow these cities to be defined by destruction, instead, she focuses on their intricate histories and the life that used to be within them. In the face of migration and displacement cultural identity, particularly Arab identity, is preserved and celebrated. The act of recognizing and naming these towns serves as a type of resistance to political conflict and destruction.

Hijra is characterized by migratory and existential resistance. The poems explore the process of leaving home and the ongoing search for belonging, in which migration acts as an instrument of transition and a form of resistance to the loss of identity. The speaker resists total assimilation into new cultures, holding to memories of home and traditions from the past. The collection represents a conflict between transition and rootedness. The speakers are found frequently traveling, resisting the permanence of settling in any one area. This resistance is manifested in the speaker's refusal to let go of the past, while navigating new and unfamiliar territories. The resistance is not always grand or overt but often quiet and personal, existing in the small, daily acts of remembering family recipes, speaking the mother tongue, or recalling the stories of ancestors.

The Twenty-Ninth Year focuses more on personal resistance, particularly against cultural and familial expectations about adulthood, relationships, and identity, while also integrating elements of ethnicity and roots. The poems oppose being confined by traditional benchmarks or responsibilities such as marriage or permanence. The speaker rejects the desire to hold on to a fixed sense of self, instead, the speakers of the poems are found celebrating the fluidity, complexity and evolving nature of identity. The effort to overcome difficulties like anorexia, sleeplessness, and drug addiction, combined with her trust in God, allows her to resist the harmful effects of Western civilization. The speaker's resistance to the overpowering influence of the host culture can be traced in these lines of the poem "Common Ancestors," where the speaker contemplates:

If I forget Arabic,
 then extinct is my grandmother, her lentil soup, the photographs water
 mottled, on the back مانشلا scrawled, and the year. (15)

In this way, resistance in Hala Alyan's work is multifaceted, and is rooted in survival, memory, and the ongoing fight for cultural and personal sovereignty. Her poetry doesn't shy away from the realities of political violence, but it also refuses to reduce her characters to victims. Instead, Alyan portrays them as resilient and active in their struggles, whether through the perseverance of memory or the reclamation of identity in the face of dispossession.

Elements of Assimilation in the works of Hala Alyan

Hala Alyan's writings frequently explore the difficulties of cultural assimilation, particularly from the perspectives of her characters' experiences with displacement and identity. Hala Alyan's works explore into the intricate process of adjustment by the Palestinian immigrants

in various countries. She highlights both the challenges and opportunities associated with adjusting to a new culture while maintaining one's own identity. Alyan examines the effects of assimilation on people and their communities through the experiences of her characters.

In *Salt Houses*, cultural assimilation is a prominent theme as the Yacoub family struggles with the challenges of adapting to new countries and cultures due to continuous displacement. As the family members are uprooted from Palestine and resettle in places like Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, France, and the United States, they face the pressures of cultural assimilation. For the older generation, like Salma, Hussam, Atef and Alia, assimilation is difficult, as they attempt to hold onto their Palestinian traditions, language, and values in the face of foreign influences. Their resistance to assimilation reflects a deep connection to their lost homeland, and they often experience a sense of alienation in the places they are forced to call home. When Alia Refused to veil, Salma contemplates, what would have his dead husband commented on her upbringing, “Perhaps if you’d raised her better. Perhaps if you’d read her more Qur’an, taken her to the mosque more. An imagined pause. If I were there, she wouldn’t be that far from Allah” (17).

For the younger generation, such as Riham, Karam and Souad, the pressures of cultural assimilation are more prominent. Growing up in different countries, they often feel disconnected from their Palestinian identity and feel more inclined to blend into their surrounding cultures although they don’t fully assimilate into the Western lifestyle, it influences them to a large extent. As Alia comments on Souad’s raising her children in American ways, “You have raised these children as Americans. They barely understand what their grandmother is saying to them” (242).

On the other hand, the fourth generation of Salama, means the grandchildren of Alia and Atef seem fully assimilated into the Western lifestyle because they were born and brought up in

America and France, they have seen their parents interacting in the language of the host nation except their talk with Alia and Atef. Their assimilation is particularly evident in the way they adopt new languages, lifestyles, and social norms. The children of Karam and his sister Souad miss their American home and lifestyle during their visit to Beirut. They have fully assimilated the western values. As Manar contemplates, “The night after night of dating, shaking the hands of men who would break her heart, wearing lipstick and straightening her back. A pregnancy out of wedlock. Yes, she thinks. Something has been lost” (290). The novel portrays how cultural assimilation is not just a matter of external adaptation but also involves internal conflicts, as characters grapple with their sense of belonging and identity.

Cultural assimilation in *Salt Houses* is shown as a complex process, where the characters of first and second-generation migrants are forced to negotiate between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to their new environments. The generational divide highlights different approaches to assimilation: while the elders struggle to maintain their cultural identity, the younger members increasingly mix into the cultures around them, reflecting the aftereffects of exile and displacement. This confusion between holding on and letting go reflects the emotional effects of assimilation, especially for a family that is constantly moving and losing touch with its homeland. Yet, despite these challenges, *Salt Houses* also depicts the resilience of cultural memory, as even between assimilation, traces of Palestinian identity persist within the family.

Cultural assimilation is portrayed uniquely in *The Arsonists' City* by each member of the Nasr family, indicating the individual difficulties and conflicts they confront as they balance their Middle Eastern roots and American lives. While some characters fully embrace American society, others struggle with the loss or suppression of their Middle Eastern identity, illustrating the difficulties of living between cultures.

The main character of the novel Idris, is so much tortured by the political environment of Lebanon and the death of his friend Zakaria that he plans to start a new life in America with his wife Mazna. He is so hopeful and wishes to start a medical career. When Mazna asks if he misses Beirut, he replies, ““I don’t know if I miss Beirut.” He sighs. “I work every day. And I like Eddie and the others. Anyway—Beirut feels dead. Doesn’t it? After everything”” (313). He easily adapts to the Western lifestyle and earns the respect of a renowned heart surgeon over there. With the passage of time, he starts feeling at home in America by adapting the values of America and raising three children in American culture. He wants to snap all ties with Beirut by selling his ancestral home but he can’t do that.

The character of Idris shows voluntary assimilation whereas Mazna seems to be forcefully assimilating into American culture to survive. Mazna, Idris’s wife, experiences cultural assimilation with deep personal conflict. Born in Syria, she moves to the U.S. after marrying Idris, leaving behind her acting career and ambitions. For her, assimilation is not only about adopting a new culture but also about suppressing parts of herself. She resents the life she has built in America to some extent, feeling as though she has sacrificed her dreams and identity to conform to a new role as a mother and wife in a foreign land. Mazna's internal turmoil over assimilation and the everyday battles are reflected in the following lines:

Every Monday, Idris counts the bills and leaves them in an envelope so she can go grocery shopping. “Buy anything else you want,” he tells her. “Clothes. Get your nails done.” But the reality is that the money just about covers their food and may be a restaurant meal or two, and she doesn’t have the heart to tell him. Idris is displaced too... Mazna is in the produce aisle, picking the cheapest apricots. (311)

Each member of the Nasr family reveals different aspects of cultural assimilation, showing how it has shaped their personal history, family dynamics, and identity. Mazna regards America as a place where “It’s difficult to read people in America; everyone dresses the same, speaks the same” (322). At that place, each of them confronts the challenge of reconciling their parents' heritage with their own lives. The children of Mazna, particularly Naj, Mimi, and Ava, embody the complexities of second-generation immigrant assimilation on the superficial level three of them seem American but by the end of the novel their love and connection with their roots are revealed.

Throughout the novel, the theme of cultural assimilation is portrayed as a deeply personal and multi-layered experience, where the characters assimilate into a new culture according to the demands of their new lives abroad. The first generation takes time to adjust to the new cultural values as after years of stay in America when they are considered American by the Lebanese, Marry says to Souad, “Your parents are really American now, aren’t they” (105). Yet, Mazna resents her children marrying non -Arabs. Even the second generation of migrants can’t be considered fully assimilated as they preserve some Arabic traditions and values even after living in a foreign land. Only the children of Ava who are the third generation of migrants, can be considered fully assimilated into the Western world because neither they can speak Arabic nor do they know anything about Arab culture because their grandparents migrated to America even before the birth of their parents.

In Hala Alyan's poetry, assimilation frequently appears as a theme that reflects the tension between adapting to new cultures and maintaining a connection to one's roots. As Ewa Chrusciel writes in the preface of her online published interview of Hala Alyan entitled, “Grief at the Verge of Revelation: A Conversation with Hala Alyan” about Alyan’s poetry:

Blurring the boundaries between space, time, and poetic form, each of her poems is an act of resistance: resistance against forgetting; resistance against the womb that will not hold; resistance against personal and public plunder, dispossession, and erasure. Her poems speak of trauma betrothed with the mundane. (Chrusciel)

Resistance is a recurrent theme of Alyan's poetry. Across her collections, characters and speakers struggle with the emotional and cultural impact of migration, often feeling torn between the desire to fit into their new environments and the pull of their ancestral identities. In Hala Alyan's poem "Aubade" from *Four Cities*, the speaker reflects on the quiet, intimate moments of dawn, capturing a sense of vulnerability and contemplation. In this piece, Alyan explores themes of cultural assimilation where the speaker is so immersed in the Western lifestyle and the music of nightclubs that even the holy morning prayers of Islam can't budge her. The imagery depicts cultural and emotional transition and the cultural assimilation into the Western lifestyle:

Dancing until the sky darted with gold, eardrums pulse

Echoes. Even the *Muezzin* is muted, underwater humming

As men carry fires for prickly pears and drum each engine

Into snare bass. (44)

The theme of assimilation can be traced in the poem "Scarlett O'Hara at the Night Club" from *Atrium*, the poem is based on the theme of identity, displacement, and the quest for belonging. By contrasting Scarlett O'Hara's iconic resilience with a modern nightclub setting, Alyan highlights the tension between past and present, tradition and modernity. The poem's vivid imagery and introspective tone delve into the protagonist's inner world, emphasizing the feeling of existing in a liminal space, where the familiar and the alien coexist. The nightclub becomes a

metaphor for the transition where the connection from the past has been snapped and a new identity has taken place. The poem reflects the cultural assimilation of the migrants where she is wearing a Western dress, enjoying the Western culture of dance clubs and in this liminal space the news of war at her native land doesn't influence her because now she has started feeling herself detached from her roots:

My newly waxed legs

Emerge from the sequins

Of this tiny dress...

I am told there has been a war, two,

Seven, but cannot bear well over the hip-hop-

Trance music. I ripple like water. (17)

The chord of cultural assimilation has been aptly touched in Hala Alyan's poem "Upstate II" in *The Twenty-ninth Year*. The speaker's struggle to create a balance between her cultural heritage and her new identity is the theme of the poem. The poem offers a deep exploration of the complexities of belonging and how individuals can navigate between different cultural contexts. The poem emphasizes the tension between cultural memory and the reality of adapting to a new environment. The speaker reflects on the process of self-discovery, navigating between the desire to embrace new cultural practices and the longing to hold on to her original identity. The imagery of familiar, intimate memories contrasts with the present, where assimilation is subtly unfolding. The speaker is found in feeling of guilt for being fully assimilated into the western world with her external lifestyle and habits:

A century of sex and heartbreak in this country house. Crowned by pines.

Tonight I almost drank wine again. History does that—a telescope from

both ends, the undesirous memory of smallness, how I snake toward my-

self only to discover I have disturbed no one's nest but my own. (78)

Hala Alyan's works vividly capture the intricate challenges of cultural assimilation, depicting characters who carefully juggle maintaining their cultural roots while adjusting to new surroundings. Her writing conveys the struggles and strength that define the immigrant experience, emphasizing the evolving nature of identity. Alyan's characters often exist in transitional spaces, reflecting both the sorrow of displacement and the aspiration for belonging. Her examination of cultural hybridity highlights the profound impact of embracing multiple facets of identity.

a. Elements of Cultural Hybridity in the works of Hala Alyan

Hala Alyan's works exhibit cultural hybridity through the integration of Palestinian heritage and new Western cultural settings, resulting in a unique literary voice. Her characters frequently struggle with identity and belonging, highlighting the difficulties of passing through many cultures. Alyan uses a combination of Arabic and English language to enhance her narrative and highlight cultural connections. Her portrayal of immigrant experiences, particularly in Palestinian-American contexts, highlights the conflicts between traditions, histories, and modernity. Alyan's examination of exile, memory, and belonging reveals how identities can be altered by interactions with culture. Her poems and novels highlight the beauty and challenges of living between worlds. In her works, Hala Alyan depicts hybridity both as a challenge and a source of strength.

In *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan, cultural hybridity manifests through the experiences of multiple generations of a displaced Palestinian family. The novel explores how these characters navigate their evolving identities while being uprooted from their homeland and thrust into different cultures across the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. One key element of cultural hybridity in the novel is the transnational identity the characters develop as they move between countries. Displacement from Palestine compels them to reconstruct their sense of self in Kuwait, Lebanon, and eventually, Western nations like France and the U.S. This constant movement creates a hybrid identity where characters balance their Palestinian heritage with the new cultural influences they come across. Each generation struggles with this duality, expressing feelings of alienation and belonging to multiple locations. Similarly in *Salt Houses*, Linah, the granddaughter of Alia born and brought up in America found the cultural hybridity of Beirut quite confusing:

They all come from elsewhere. Alex's father is Jordanian, Tony's is Swedish, and Camille's mother is British. They all are mishmashed and mixed up, which draws them together, Linah sees, just like the siphonophores she studied in biology last year. (230)

Language is yet another means that shows cultural hybridity. The characters of her novel frequently combine Arabic with the languages of the nations they live in. This language conflict signifies their internal fight to maintain their roots while adapting to their new environment. The usage of Arabic vocabulary by Alia and Atef in addition to English, their children Riham, Karam, and Souad's education at English-medium schools, and their grandchildren's mastery of French demonstrate the tension between tradition and assimilation. The use of multiple languages serves as a constant reminder of the characters' complex identities.

The singing of Alia's birthday song in three languages reflect the cultural hybridity within a single family, "First they sing in Arabic, Then English, Then Manar and Zain and Linah sing in French" (307).

The elements of racial hybridity can also be traced in *Salt Houses* as Karam marries a Kurdish girl named Budur in America and Souad who is Palestinian by roots marries Elie in Paris is Lebanese. Further, the children of the parents who belong to different races, different cultures and speak different languages will be termed racial hybrids. The children will bear the cultural influences from both of their parents. As Manar ponders of her identity during her visit to Palestine, where someone calls her Lebanese, she contemplates, "Lebanese father, Palestinian mother, Paris, America. A mutt, Seham, her friend calls her.... Lately she had been accepting it, reveling in the notion that her problems, the disarray of her life, all spring from her heritage" (276).

Food and rituals are also used to indicate cultural hybridity throughout *Salt Houses*. Characters create traditional Palestinian foods while living in various countries. These rituals constitute an anchor to their homeland and past, yet the surroundings in which they conduct them in cities like Paris, Boston, or Beirut underline their divided identities. Such an incident can be traced when the cooking routine of Riham's home in Amman is shared, "They do it twice a week, her parents coming over for dinner, Rosie cooking *Koussa* or *maqoluba*, her mother's favourite" (180). The cultural blending of food from their native and adopted countries becomes symbolic of their dual existence, preserving tradition while incorporating aspects of their new environments.

In this way *Salt Houses* addresses the psychological effects of cultural hybridity. The characters, particularly those born into displacement, face fragmentation as they try to reconcile

their multiple identities. This internal conflict reflects the larger immigrant experience, in which characters are neither wholly at home in their native society nor completely assimilated into their adoptive one. This continual negotiation between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, results in a multifaceted, confused identity.

In *The Arsonists' City*, Hala Alyan portrays cultural hybridity through the lives of a family navigating their mixed identities, blending their Middle Eastern roots with Western influences. The characters, living between Lebanon and the United States, embody the fusion of cultures in their daily experiences, relationships, and sense of self. This hybridity is seen in their interactions with both Lebanese and American societies, reflecting the evolving nature of identity in the diaspora. Hala Alyan depicts cultural hybridity through the family dynamics of the Nasr family. The family members have roots in Syria and Lebanon but they have migrated to the United States. But even after the migration, the connection of the Family with Lebanon and their frequent visits is an example of their transnational existence which creates a hybrid cultural identity for each family member, where they balance their Middle Eastern heritage with their American experiences. The family's choice to return to Beirut and face their past further highlights the continuous negotiation of their hybrid identities.

Mazna's experience as the head of the family who moved from Lebanon to the U.S. is another instance of hybridity, particularly in how she raises her children. Her life merges her native traditions with the practicalities of living in a new place. She tries to inculcate a feeling of Arab identity in her children while simultaneously conforming to American social norms, resulting in a household where cultural values from both ethnicities coexist. Although Mazna was good in English during her school but in America despite her efforts of assimilation, her procurement and life style gave an air of her roots:

Ava found her mother too loud, too beautiful; her English is not fluent enough. She hadn't anticipated this, how her children's schools would become minefields—mispronounced words, incorrectly packed lunches—how outdated and clumsy she'd feel among the fluent blond mothers. (360)

Ava's life illustrates cultural hybridity as she straddles her Lebanese heritage, Palestinian appearance, and her American reality. Her marriage to a non-Arab man and the conflicts that arise in raising their children in the U.S. portray the blending of these two worlds. She feels the pull of her family's cultural expectations while adapting to the Western norms surrounding her. This duality reveals how she negotiates her sense of belonging, caught between honoring her origins and living in a foreign environment.

Naj, as an artist, expresses her cultural hybridity through music. Her band mixes elements of Arab and Western music, symbolizing her fusion of the two cultures. She embraces the freedom and individuality of Western life but retains a connection to her Arab heritage through her art and identity. This creative blending of cultural influences allows her to craft a unique space where both her identities coexist. As the musical band of Naj is described by a newspaper,

The musical duo Noja, fronted by Naj, nee Najla, Nasar, creates an album of defiance, with guttural lyrics, powerhouse performances, and most compellingly, a mixture of Arabic and English lyrics, so the listener might often be unsure of what is being said but is happy to sing along. (75)

The Arsonists' City also explores the broader societal context of Beirut, a city marked by its cultural hybridity. Mimi notices the hybrid culture of Beirut during his visit to the night club, "The crowd is different than Austen, more careless, people smoking on the dance floor,

screaming over the music in Arabic and French and English, the bartender grinning like they're part of the crowd (281).” The diverse population, including various religious and ethnic groups, contributes to a rich tapestry of cultural interactions and exchanges. This setting serves as a framework for the characters’ journeys of cultural assimilation and resistance, showcasing the complex nature of cultural hybridity in a postcolonial context.

Hala Alyan’s poetry, in collections entitled *Atrium*, *Four Cities*, *Hijra* and *The Twenty-Ninth Year*, powerfully embodies elements of cultural hybridity, reflecting her experiences as a Palestinian-American poet living in a diaspora. Alyan explores the notion of belonging to multiple homes but feels a deep sense of disconnection. The physical movement between places like the Middle East and the United States in her poetry represents realistic and authentic examples of cultural hybridity. Alyan explores the tension and harmony between Arab heritage and the American upbringing of her characters, using vivid imagery and their anecdotes to illustrate the blending of these cultures. The poems in her collections frequently juxtapose traditional Arab customs with contemporary Western lifestyle.

Alyan’s poetry reflects intergenerational tension, particularly between immigrant parents and their children, who grow up between worlds. Her poems often explore the clash between the traditional values of the older generation and the more hybridized, Westernized identities of the younger generation. As the poem “Heirloom” from *The Twenty-Ninth Year* depicts the mental state of a migrant who remembers her rich heritage and mentions the languages learned by her ancestors, she is found connected with her roots in the amount she can in her Western upbringing still she laments that she is not attached with her faith like her ancestors:

My grandfather learned Hebrew because they learn Arabic. I am the

daughter of Nafez. The granddaughter of Mohammad.

The granddaughter of Salim.

I usher in each dream with Quran. Yes, Mama, I'm reading the suras
again. But I don't fast. I don't kneel. (65)

There is a profound sense of nostalgia and longing for the homeland in Alyan's work, interwoven with her American experiences. This duality creates a tension between the past and present and between the idealized homeland and the actual lived experience in the diaspora. The sense of loss is often tied to both physical places and intangible cultural markers, such as language, family customs, and history. Alyan frequently blends Arabic and English, creating a dynamic linguistic interplay that mirrors the intersection of her cultural identities. Arabic words, phrases, and cultural references appear seamlessly in her poetry, symbolizing the coexistence of these cultural spheres. As she exemplifies in the poem "And in Iraq, Fires" of *Four Cities*, "The American boys practice their Arabic" (26). Such references depict the cultural hybrid migrants who are trying to keep their children connected with Arabic along with English medium schooling.

Alyan's poems are rich with visual and sensory details from both Arab and Western cultures. The food, vegetation, music, smells, and even the architecture in her poetry frequently toggle between these two worlds, reflecting the fusion and sometimes the clash of cultural symbols and practices. As the poem, "Origin" from *Four Cities* exemplifies, "The Gazania flower grows in / Lemon and reds in Africa" (61). Similarly, in the poem "Common Ancestors," Alyan explores the experience of an Arab migrant who is living in a hybrid culture and grappling with self-blame for straying from religious traditions and adopting new ways of life in a foreign

country. The poem highlights the inner conflict of balancing two cultures, with the speaker feeling guilty about losing touch with her roots. Alyan expresses sorrow over the transformation of her Arabic identity, as the influence of Western culture increasingly shapes her sense of self. As mentioned in the poem “Common Ancestors” of *The Twenty-Ninth Year* in following words, “I forgot that Zaynab came before Fatima. I drank on the first day of Eid. / From roof to dirt, say hallelujah, say hallelujah: / I’m a convert now. I’m a land waiting for my new, westerly name” (15).

Alyan’s poetic landscapes often move between cities like Beirut, Ramallah, and New York. This constant shifting of place mirrors the fragmented, hybrid nature of identity for someone straddling multiple cultures. Her poems frequently invoke place names to anchor the emotional and cultural layers of her experiences. Alyan also examines the intersections of gender and culture, particularly how traditional gender roles from Arab culture are negotiated in a Western context. This hybrid space allows her to explore complex themes around autonomy, identity, and womanhood, which are influenced by both Arab and American cultural expectations. She has portrayed the changed identity of a Arab female in the culturally diverse location of Columbia in his poem, “Step One: Admit Powerlessness” of *The Twenty-Ninth Year*:

Out in the cold night I was a body renamed, emerging from a sea
 of white girls, my hoodie too thin, veins blue as hydrangeas,
 laughing with the Columbia boys on Morningside,
 chasing one tallboy with the other. Through the bar window,
 a lightbulb exploded like a white tusk in the evening,

and when the sun finally rose, I believed in a different god. (32)

Through her poetry, its characters and circumstance, Hala Alyan depicts the experiences of Cultural Hybridity. Alyan illustrates that cultural hybridity is not just about the coexistence of two distinct identities, but the creation of something new from the intersections of those cultures, where belonging and identity are constantly negotiated. Alyan's poetry collections are prime examples of cultural hybridity in poetry, as she captures the complexity, tension, and beauty that comes from living between worlds.

In this way, the works of Hala Alyan contain the elements of resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity. Her works are perfect examples of resistance literature as she portrays the authentic picture of the people who have faced the Palestinian crisis, the exodus and the hardships of living in refugee camps and nomadic life of transnationalism. There are a few examples of violent resistance in her novels along with the multiple references of silent resistance in the form of remembrance which make her works realistic. For Alyan resistance is more the portrayal of reality, hardships, challenges and trauma of displacement. Like the great Palestinian writers of resistance her works have presented a true picture of the people of the Palestinian diaspora as a backdrop of his novels and narrative poetry where she tries to keep her Palestinian identity and ethnicity alive.

The instances of assimilation have also been honestly portrayed by Hala Alyan. But both of her novels and poetry depict the instances of partial assimilation not the full assimilation. It has been shown in her works that it is too hard to assimilate the new cultural values and languages by the first generation of the migrants, they resist assimilating, and the second generation of the migrants straddle in the in-between position of the partial assimilation. It is only the third or the fourth generation of Palestinian migrants who seem fully assimilated into

the culture of the host land. But in both of her novels, Hala Alyan has tried to keep the third and fourth generation of migrants too connected with their roots either through their connection with their grandparents or through their transnational visits to their homelands.

After analysing the instances of resistance and assimilation it can easily be traced that as a whole in her novels and poems, her characters have neither fully resisted the change nor fully assimilated into the new culture. They have taken an in-between path of detaching from neither the homeland nor the host land and staying connected with both. This in-between culture or the liminal situation can be termed cultural hybridity. Alyan has given ample of instances of Arab migrants speaking Arabic, teaching about their religious practice to their children, and trying to introduce their traditional dishes to their children, by making them visit their homelands or by telling them the stories and anecdotes of Palestine. The people of Palestinian origin have been shown to make their offspring remember their roots and maintain their cultural identity along with living in the culture and lifestyle of the Western world.

The Palestinian migrants vacillate between their Arab Identity and Western values. Influences of both of the cultures can be traced in their personality, their lifestyles and cultural performances. They frequently use Arabic words and phrases in their English and arbitrarily try to keep their ethnicity alive by teaching Arabic to their children and introducing ethnic traditions and food items. The elderly Palestinians try to introduce Palestine to their grandchildren in the form of oral histories and anecdotes. But it becomes difficult for the upcoming generations to maintain the same connection which their ancestors maintain because for the new generations Palestine is an imaginary concept which doesn't exist in geography. The Palestinian Migrants have adopted the new ways of western lifestyle by trying to maintain connections with the root culture and Arab values.

Conclusion

The novels and poetry collections of Palestinian American poet and novelist Hala Alyan depict the liminal identity of the Palestinian diaspora community, which vacillates between their connection with their roots and the new identity. Hala Alyan has presented the everyday life of Palestinian migrants and realistically portrayed the challenges and hardships they have faced in their day-to-day lives in her novels and her poems. The word Palestinian migrants or Palestinian diaspora has a broad meaning in itself and it includes millions of people who have directly or indirectly been influenced by it or those who constitute the Palestinian diaspora. In the first chapter of the thesis detailed meaning of diaspora has been delineated along with the new concepts associated with diaspora like transnationalism in the everchanging era of globalization and technological advancement.

As diaspora refers to a community of people who have relocated from their homeland or ancestral region an originally, the term was used to describe the dispersion of Jewish populations, but it now applies more broadly to groups such as immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates. Similarly Hala Alyan has discussed about the Palestinisn diaspora in her poems and novels. The Palestinian diaspora refers to the global community of Palestinians who have been displaced from their ancestral homeland, primarily due to conflict, occupation, and political instability, particularly following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and subsequent conflicts. This diaspora is spread across the Middle East, including countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as in Europe, North America, and other regions. The Arab-Israel wars and the political turmoil and other displacements followed by these conflicts have worked as a backdrop of Hala Alyan's

works. Many Palestinians in the diaspora are refugees or descendants of refugees, maintaining strong cultural, familial, and political ties to their homeland despite being separated by borders. The Palestinian diaspora is marked by a shared sense of identity, a collective memory of displacement, and an ongoing commitment to the right of return and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

In context with the Palestinian diaspora, the origin of the Palestinian crisis and the formation of the Palestinian diaspora due to the declaration of the independent state of Israel followed by two exoduses named *Nakba* and *Naksa* have been briefly discussed in the first chapter of the thesis and further, it has been found out that on the bases of readings about Palestinian diaspora, it can be further divided into five types. The first category includes those who left Palestine voluntarily before Israel declared independence and others who were forced to flee due to violence and terror. The second classification is based on their places of settlement, distinguishing between those residing in Arab nations, European countries, or in refugee camps and occupied areas like the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The third category involves individuals living in refugee camps, which vary in the rights they provide; some camps offer certain rights, while others, like those in Lebanon, do not grant any privileges. This issue of basic human rights and access to facilities is also prevalent among migrants in different regions. The fourth classification is based on migration patterns, where some individuals went directly to America and settled there, while others experienced a nomadic existence, moving from one neighboring area to another. Finally, the fifth category considers the connection to Palestine, whether that connection is physical or virtual, and whether the diasporic community maintains ties to Palestine or has become fully assimilated into their host country.

All five classifications can be further divided into two groups: common Palestinians and Palestinian elites, as their circumstances differ significantly. While many Palestinians struggle for basic rights, Palestinian elites enjoy privileges, including transnational mobility and special economic and political rights. Due to these variations, some scholars argue against labeling Palestinians as diasporic. However, despite these exceptions, the concept of the Palestinian diaspora remains valid, as many individuals continue to cherish the memory of their homeland, strive to preserve their Palestinian identity, and seek to return. Prominent authors such as Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, Edward Said, Susan Abulhawa, Suheir Hammad, and Sahar Khalifeh have vividly depicted the lives and emotional experiences of Palestinians.

In the first chapter of this thesis, various findings have been presented concerning the Palestinian diaspora and the underlying reasons for the persistent desire for return and sovereignty over Palestine. Firstly, the homeland of the Palestinians remains occupied, and they lack an officially recognized state of Palestine. Furthermore, there are instances where Israeli authorities have denied even the existence of Palestine, prompting Palestinians to seek a land to which they can authentically belong. Secondly, a significant number of Palestinians reside in dire conditions within refugee camps that do not confer citizenship or basic rights. These camps also serve as communal hubs for individuals sharing similar diasporic experiences and aspirations. Thirdly, those forcibly expelled from their homeland endure a profound trauma that they are unable to forget, often recounting their experiences through stories and anecdotes for future generations. Lastly, Palestinians leading more stable lives in countries such as the United States and various European nations actively engage in writing and advocacy for Palestine, motivated by the plight of their compatriots who lack fundamental rights and services in refugee camps.

Consequently, the literary contributions regarding Palestine serve to strengthen Alyan's connections to her homeland and enrich the body of literature related to the Palestinian diaspora.

The second chapter of the thesis has defined the theory of Liminality along with its key terms and applied the theory of liminality to the novels of Hala Alyan. As the theory of Liminality is a concept introduced by Arnold Van Gennep in his work on rites of passage. Liminality refers to the transitional phase in rituals where individuals move from one status to another. The theory identifies three key stages: pre-liminal (separation), liminal (the in-between state), and post-liminal (reintegration). Van Gennep identified four categories of rites of passage that are universally observed across cultures and societies: passage of time, passage of place, passage of status and passage of situation. Victor Turner expanded on this idea, emphasizing the significance of the "liminal" phase as a period of ambiguity and transformation, where individuals are neither in their previous role nor fully integrated into their new one. Turner highlights the importance of *communitas*, a sense of solidarity and equality that emerges among participants during this phase. Turner also introduced the idea of the *liminoid*, which refers to voluntary, individual experiences that mimic liminality but occur in non-ritual contexts, like art or play. *Permanent liminality* describes situations where individuals or groups are indefinitely suspended in the liminal phase without full reintegration. A *liminal being* exists in this ambiguous space, embodying the qualities of both phases. *Liminal space*, in turn, refers to the physical or metaphorical areas where transformation occurs, characterized by uncertainty and the potential for change. The following findings have been made by analysing the novels of Hala Alyan based on three phases of Liminality and its key terms- Communitas, liminoid, liminal space, permanent liminality etc.

In her novels *Salt Houses* and *The Arsonist's City*, Hala Alyan has delved deep into the lives of characters navigating liminal identities and dilemmas stemming from diaspora and transnational movements. These individuals struggle to maintain ties to their past while simultaneously aiming to progress into the future which put them into an in-between position named as liminal position. Hala Alyan has skillfully portrayed the passage of time, place, situation and place through the guise of the multigenerational family history of the characters in her novels. The migration of various characters from Palestine to other geographical locations is a liminal passage in itself as it carries insecurity and ambiguity. The migrants are not sure whether they will be accepted by the host land or not, whether they will have a secure life or not. Their life is full of uncertainties. As liminality studies the transitional rights similarly, the Palestinian migrant characters have gone through a lot of changes of adaptation and adjustment to survive at the new locations. This dual commitment to both their history and their present circumstances places them in a liminal state, with a dilemma of choosing assimilation or resistance. Their stay in Palestine can be termed their pre-liminal situation; the process of migration and trauma can be termed a liminal passage or liminal period of transition and their settlement at the new geographical locations can be termed as post-liminal state. But even after settling at the new locations if they have adjusted or not, whether they have any connections with their roots or not or has they fully resisted the change or assimilated into the host culture, these questions have been studied in detail in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The key terms associated with the theory of liminality have also been applied to similar situations in the novels as when members of the same community come together in a foreign land, they foster a sense of *communitas*, characterized by a shared spirit of unity and mutual support. Furthermore, gatherings in spaces like restaurants, performances, or exhibitions, where migrants reflect on

their lost homelands and cultural identities, create liminoid experiences, offering temporary environments where their past and present converge. Characters who continually wrestle with liminal dilemmas regarding their identity or nationality exemplify the concept of permanent liminality. In this way, the elements and instances of liminality in the novels of Hala Alyan have thoroughly been studied second chapter.

The poetry collections of Hala Alyan have been analysed with the theory of liminality in the third chapter. The key themes portrayed in her novels have directly been examined but the analysis of poetry differs from the analysis of fiction because poetic language often carries multiple layers of meaning and invites diverse interpretations. This openness makes it necessary to adopt a more careful and flexible method. While studying the poetry of Hala Alyan, it became important to base the interpretation on certain informed assumptions. These were shaped by a close reading of her novels and memoir, which reveal recurring themes and emotional patterns, as well as an understanding of the broader historical and political context of the Israel–Palestine conflict that influences her writing. Together, these contextual insights allowed for a clearer and more complete understanding of the complexities present in her poetry.

An analysis of Hala Alyan's poetry collections through the lens of liminality reveals that her poems are rich with instances of liminality. Many of the poems take the form of personal narratives, where the speaker reflects on her own or others' experiences of displacement and its accompanying challenges. These speakers are often caught between the past and the future, unable to fully leave behind their history or fully embrace what lies ahead, placing them in a liminal state. Characters who struggle with their identity, unsure whether they are Palestinian or inhabitants of a foreign land, can be described as liminal beings. The narrators in Hala Alyan's poems often find themselves in liminal situations where they struggle to make decisions or

choose a path. References to borderlands, asylums, and whorehouses in her poetry serve as examples of liminal spaces, places where the characters exist between worlds or identities. The depiction of queer love in her work represents liminal relationships, further emphasizing themes of in-betweenness. Additionally, Alyan frequently alludes to forgetfulness and Alzheimer's in old age, placing her protagonists in a liminal state where they are trapped in the memories of a past they can no longer access in their present reality.

The stories and anecdotes passed down by the first generation of migrants to their children have created a liminal world for future generations. These places no longer exist as they once existed, with the migration of original inhabitants and due to the development of new towns and buildings, yet the elders recount their lost homeland in vivid detail, preserving it as an oral history. As a result, places like the old Palestine, Jaffa, Nablus, and Aleppo appear as liminal spaces, torn between memory and reality. The references of migration in Alyan's work, where individuals move to unknown lands and face uncertainty about what awaits them, reflect a liminal journey filled with ambiguity. Furthermore, the portrayal of groups migrating together highlights the concept of *communitas*, as these individuals share a common experience of displacement and a collective goal of finding safety and a new home for their families.

The stories and anecdotes passed down by the first generation of migrants to their children have constructed a liminal world for subsequent generations. These places, once physically real, no longer exist in their original form, as new towns and buildings have replaced them. However, the elders have meticulously narrated every detail of their lost homeland through oral history, rendering places like Old Palestine, Jaffa, Nablus, and Aleppo as liminal spaces. References to migration, where individuals move from one location to another with no certainty about what awaits them in a new land among unfamiliar people, reflect a liminal journey marked

by ambiguity and uncertainty. The depiction of groups migrating together exemplifies *communitas*, as these individuals, uprooted for the same reasons, collectively pursue the shared goal of finding a safe home for their families.

Hala Alyan's work intricately depicts the liminal conditions and dilemmas individuals encounter in their daily lives, particularly with religious beliefs, cultural traditions, customs, food, and prayers. The speaker in her poems is caught between two conflicting forces. On one side, there is an embrace of Western indulgences such as late-night parties, alcoholism, smoking, strip clubs, open sexual culture, and queer relationships, which reflect a distancing from traditional faith. On the other side, the speaker feels drawn toward the remnants of her lost homeland, religious traditions, the Quran, Suras, and Christianity. Throughout the poems, it becomes evident that the speaker is in a continuous search for solace, attempting to find it through both Arab cultural values and Christianity, yet remains in a state of liminality, uncertain about which faith or set of values to fully embrace. Alyan's poetry is thus deeply infused with themes of liminality, as her characters navigate the complex intersections of identity, faith, and belonging.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis, the identity crisis and rootlessness of the various characters from Hala Alyan's poetry and novels have been analysed with the theory of liminality. The concept of identity has been briefly defined which refers to the characteristics, beliefs, values, and experiences that define an individual or a group, shaping how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. It encompasses aspects such as nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, and personal experiences, forming a cohesive sense of self or belonging within a particular social framework. While the liminal identity is a more fluid and transitional state of identity, existing between clearly defined categories or roles. Individuals with

a liminal identity often find themselves between two or more cultural, social, or personal spaces, unable to fully belong to any single one. The characters in Hala Alyan's novels and poems navigate liminal dilemmas, as they struggle with the uncertainty of their identity and where they truly belong. Her writings focus on the intricate experiences of migration, relocation, and displacement, as well as the challenges that arise from these movements. The identity of Palestinian migrants in the West is inherently liminal, as they are unable to fully assimilate into their new environment while also unable to entirely maintain their ethnic culture. This state of in-betweenness highlights the ongoing tension between cultural preservation and adaptation in a foreign land.

Hala Alyan's novels and poems are replete with narratives and characters depicting Palestinian migrants grappling with rootlessness and identity crises. Her works have emphasised the importance of maintaining a connection to the past and ethnic culture, with both novels structured as family sagas tracing their roots back to the lost lands and cities of Palestine and Syria. The first generation of migrants has been traumatized and unable to accept the loss they don't want to transform themselves, so they are at the pre-liminal stage. The second generation of migrants has been struggling with the identity crisis. They have been caught at an in-between position of neither being fully Arab nor being fully American. The second generation is at the liminal stage as they are children of Arab migrants and are raised in the Western world. This generation has confronted the challenges of adjusting to a new country, and interacting with people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds, while struggling to understand their children as their behavior and lifestyle influenced by the Western world feel alien to them. The third and fourth generations of migrants have been situated in the post-liminal stage, as they have embraced the language, culture, and lifestyle of the host nation up to a large extent, signifying

their full integration into the new society. There are some exceptions too as the children of third generation might be attached with roots and ethnicity and a particular character of second generation might have fully assimilated the foreign culture.

It has been observed that Hala Alyan's narrative poetry has also defined the liminal identity of her characters, capturing their experiences of hardship, displacement, trauma, and the complexities of adjustment. Alyan has depicted the lives of various individuals, particularly women, who have endured the physical and emotional traumas of war, migration, and exodus. Their feelings of nostalgia and diasporic longing have placed them in a liminal state. Those characters can be termed at the pre-liminal stage of identity who believe that forgetting their ethnicity and culture would be a betrayal and they are adamant about not changing themselves to adapt to new ways of life and they have refused to undergo any transition. Instances of people searching for buses to return to old cities or Alzheimer's patients imagining themselves in Palestine exemplify this pre-liminal stage of identity. The characters who have been found attempting to preserve their past through religious and cultural practices while adapting to Western lifestyles can be termed as the liminal stage of identity formation. Their identities remain at the liminal stage, as they have neither fully detached from their heritage nor completely assimilated into new cultural values. The third generation of migrants has been put under the post-liminal stage of identity transformation as their connection to their roots has gotten weaker compared to their inclination towards Western values due to being born and brought up in foreign locations.

Hala Alyan's frequent references to the lost land of Palestine and cities like Nablus, Jaffa, and Ramallah can be seen as her attempts to preserve her ethnic heritage and cultural memory. In both her novels and poems, various characters glorify the rich heritage and cultural values of

their lost homeland, emphasizing the deep sense of rootlessness and identity crisis experienced by Palestinians uprooted from their homeland. Alyan masterfully captures the liminal state in which these characters find themselves, still searching for a sense of belonging. Many Palestinian migrants remain in refugee camps, clinging to the hope of return, while others linger in a state of liminality, unsure of where they truly belong. The adjective Palestinian-American with the name of Hala Alyan itself defines her liminal identity, same is the liminal identity of the characters of her novels and poems.

The fifth chapter of the thesis has analysed the elements of resistance, assimilation and cultural hybridity in the works of Hala Alyan. Staying far from the ethnic culture and homeland poses many challenges to adaptation for the migrants. These challenges have categorically been studied under the instances of resistance to change, assimilation to the cultural values of the host land and mixing both the elements of ethnic culture and Western culture, resulting in cultural hybridity. The works of Hala Alyan are true examples of resistance literature, as they have authentically depicted the experiences of individuals who have endured the Palestinian crisis, the exodus, and the challenges of life in refugee camps, as well as the nomadic existence associated with transnationalism. There are instances of both violent and passive resistance portrayed in her narratives, for conveying the realism of the characters' experiences. Alyan uses resistance in the form of remembrance and she doesn't want the rich culture and heritage of Palestine to be erased from the memories of its future generations. For Alyan, resistance has primarily served as a means of depicting the reality, struggles, challenges, and trauma of displacement. Much like prominent Palestinian writers of resistance, her works have presented a genuine representation of the Palestinian diaspora, serving as a backdrop for her novels and narrative poetry. Like

prominent Palestinian writers of resistance, her works have illuminated the true experiences of the Palestinian diaspora, serving as a poignant backdrop for her novels and narrative poetry.

Hala Alyan has authentically portrayed instances of assimilation in her works; however, both her novels and poetry illustrate only partial assimilation rather than complete integration. Her writings reveal the significant challenges faced by the first generation of migrants in adapting to new cultural values and languages, as they often resist full assimilation. The second generation occupies a transitional space characterized by partial assimilation. It is primarily the third or fourth generation of Palestinian migrants who appear to have fully integrated into the culture of their host country. Nonetheless, in both of her novels, Alyan emphasizes the importance of maintaining connections to their roots for these later generations, whether through relationships with their grandparents or through transnational visits to their ancestral homelands. As Alyan contemplates over her sense of belonging in an interview entitled, 'I Belonged Nowhere': A Story Of Displacement, From A Novelist Who Knows' with Steves Inskeep:

I would say for a very long time I felt like I belonged nowhere. The last couple of years I've sort of been reconceptualizing it — like, I kind of belong everywhere. I belong wherever I am because I'm bringing with me whatever culture, whatever history, whatever love for food, and music, and memory, and photographs, that have been passed down to me. I've gotten a little bit less attached to the idea of a physical place needing to be big enough to hold me, and hold my culture, and hold everything that's important to me.

After analysing the instances of resistance and assimilation in the works of Hala Alyan, it has been traced that as a whole in her novels and poems, her characters have neither fully

resisted the change nor fully assimilated into the new culture. They have taken an in-between path of detaching from neither the homeland nor the host land and staying connected with both. This in-between culture or the liminal situation can be termed cultural hybridity. Alyan has given ample of instances of Arab migrants speaking Arabic, teaching about their religious practice to their children, and trying to introduce their traditional dishes to their children, by making them visit their homelands or by telling them the stories and anecdotes of Palestine. The people of Palestinian origin have been shown to make their offspring remember their roots and maintain their cultural identity along with living in the culture and lifestyle of the Western world.

Alyan's works focus upon the in-betweenness of the Palestinian migrants who find themselves in a liminal position as they are unable to decide which place they truly belong to, which faith they should cling to, which language and ethnicity should be imbibed in their children. They find themselves torn between the two forces of their cultural roots and the modern world. The forceful expulsion has left indelible marks upon their personality and they try to keep Palestine alive in the forms of stories and anecdotes to the upcoming generations but they are unaware of the fact that they are building a liminal world for their children because the Palestine they remember does not exist geographically.

There are references of Palestinian Arabs who have adopted Western languages and life style but they still follow their faith; those who are living in a modernized world but still use Arabic words at their homes; they are living in countries like America and Paris still making traditional food items, celebrating their religious traditions in the foreign land all of them are liminal beings. As neither they are cutting themselves from their roots nor are fully absorbing the western values. They grapple with identity crisis and rootlessness. People living in the refugee camps suffer the most. Their identity faces a permanent state of liminality because neither they

are Palestinian nor the inhabitants of the land having the refugee camps. They don't have a place to belong to or identify themselves with, even their upcoming generations are in a permanent state of liminality.

The first generation of the migrants resist change; they stick upon their faith, religious faith and cultural observations, whereas the second and third generations try to assimilate themselves. Because for the second generation or the upcoming generations try to assimilate in the new atmosphere, it might be forceful assimilation by the host nation or it might be an effort of the migrants to get accepted, it might be the atmosphere of host land or the lack of that atmosphere which can strengthen their cultural roots and ethnicity. But despite the efforts of the second and third generations of the migrants to assimilate there are efforts of their ancestors to keep them connected with their roots by introducing them with their cultural heritage, food items, traditions and religious performances. In this pull of the twin forces the offsprings of Palestinian migrants can neither fully resist the change nor do they fully assimilate the foreign culture, they just take an in-between passage of cultural hybridity, where both the traditional and new value co-exist. As found in the works of Hala Alyan the new generations of the Palestinian migrants are found adopting the new language and lifestyle of the western World they are living in. But along with this they are following their religious faith, enjoying their traditional dishes and speaking words of Arabic language.

This research has examined the themes of identity quest and resistance in Hala Alyan's poetry and fiction through the theoretical framework of liminality. By integrating perspectives from diaspora studies, postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and resistance literature, the study demonstrates that Alyan's works portray Palestinian identity as a dynamic and evolving process shaped by displacement, exile, memory, and cultural continuity. The analysis reveals that

liminality functions not merely as a transitional phase but as a sustained condition that influences the psychological, social, and cultural experiences of Palestinians living in diaspora. Through her literary representation of fractured identities, intergenerational trauma, and the enduring attachment to homeland, Alyan redefines resistance as both a political and a cultural practice rooted in remembrance, storytelling, language, and everyday acts of survival.

The study further establishes that Alyan's literary works challenge fixed notions of identity by presenting belonging as fluid, transnational, and continually negotiated across multiple geographical and cultural spaces. Her characters and poetic speakers resist cultural erasure and historical silencing by preserving familial memories, linguistic traditions, and collective histories. Consequently, resistance in Alyan's writings extends beyond overt political struggle to encompass emotional resilience, cultural preservation, and the affirmation of Palestinian identity across generations. Her literature therefore transforms personal experiences of exile into collective narratives of endurance, hope, and survival.

The research contributes to a deeper understanding of displacement, migration, cultural identity, memory, and resistance which are profoundly relevant in contemporary global society. It also enriches existing scholarship on Palestinian diasporic literature by demonstrating the usefulness of liminality as a critical framework for interpreting contemporary literary representations of exile and belonging. Furthermore, the study promotes intercultural understanding by illuminating the lived experiences of refugees and displaced communities, offering valuable insights into identity politics, transnational belonging, and cultural resilience. This study also makes a meaningful contribution to several academic disciplines, including literary studies, cultural studies, diaspora and migration studies, postcolonial studies, trauma

studies, peace and conflict studies, and Middle Eastern studies, by offering new perspectives on identity, displacement, memory, and resistance in contemporary Palestinian literature.

Despite these contributions, the present study has certain limitations. It is primarily confined to the selected novels and poetry collections of Hala Alyan and therefore does not encompass the broader spectrum of contemporary Palestinian literature. Moreover, the study relies exclusively on textual analysis and does not incorporate reader-response studies, interviews, archival research, or comparative analyses with other Palestinian or diasporic writers. These limitations inevitably restrict the scope of the findings and indicate opportunities for further scholarly exploration. Although this study employs liminality as its primary theoretical framework, it does not examine other significant critical perspectives, such as feminism, memory studies, psychoanalytic criticism, ecocriticism, and decolonial theory, all of which are also reflected in Hala Alyan's works and offer valuable avenues for further scholarly exploration.

The study also opens several possibilities for future research. Comparative studies may examine Hala Alyan alongside writers such as Susan Abulhawa, Mourid Barghouti, Mahmoud Darwish, Raja Shehadeh, or Ghassan Kanafani to explore diverse representations of exile, memory, and resistance across generations. Future researchers may also investigate themes such as gender and feminism, intergenerational trauma, multilingualism, environmental displacement, digital diaspora, transnational identity, and refugee narratives in contemporary Palestinian literature. Comparative analyses between Palestinian diasporic writing and other global diasporic literatures could further illuminate shared experiences of migration, cultural hybridity, and belonging. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that combine literary criticism with history, psychology, sociology, migration studies, and digital humanities would provide a more comprehensive understanding of displacement and identity formation in the contemporary world.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that Hala Alyan's literary works offer a profound exploration of the liminal condition of the Palestinian diaspora, where identity is continuously negotiated through memory, movement, and resistance. Her poetry and fiction reveal that exile is not solely a condition of loss but also a space for resilience, cultural continuity, and self-reinvention. By foregrounding the interconnected themes of identity, liminality, and resistance, this study not only contributes to scholarship on Hala Alyan and Palestinian literature but also encourages broader discussions on migration, belonging, cultural memory, and human dignity. It is hoped that this research will inspire further critical engagement with contemporary Palestinian literature and expand scholarly conversations on diaspora, liminality, and resistance within an increasingly interconnected global context.

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