

Analysing the Arab-Israeli Identity Crisis in the Author Sayed Kashua's

Dancing Arabs and Let It Be Morning



I n s p i r i n g E x c e l l e n c e

Faria Rowshan

ID: 16363006

The Department of English and Humanities

August 2018

Analysing the Arab-Israeli Identity Crisis in the Author Sayed Kashua's

Dancing Arabs and Let It Be Morning

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of English and Humanities

Of

BRAC University

By

Faria Rowshan

ID: 16363006

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Masters of Arts in English

August 2018

Acknowledgements

With this dissertation, I am finally at the end of my MA journey. I am truly grateful to the Almighty that he has kept me sane throughout the process of this writing quest despite all the ups and downs I have seen before me.

This whole thing would not have been at all possible without my supervisor Anika Saba's encouragement and consideration. As she not only supported my vision but tolerated my panic attacks in the moments of confusion, and my lack of sincerity with the deadlines.

I would like to thank every one of my teachers who enlighten me with their knowledge during my time in the ENH department. A special mention goes to my former supervisor Dr Rifat Mahbub who inspired me to be more confident with my work.

Lastly, I would like to confess my gratitude to my aunt, who has always been there for me when no one else bothered. I dedicate this work to my late mother who I terribly miss, and my father and hope that I can make them proud.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	05
Introduction... ..	07
i) Postmodern Minority Discourse and Identity Crisis:.....	08
ii) Arab-Israelis, the Unfamiliar Minority	11
Chapter 1: Language in <i>Dancing Arabs</i> and <i>Let It Be Morning</i>.....	14
Chapter 2: Race in <i>Dancing Arabs</i> and <i>Let It Be Morning</i>.....	27
Conclusion.....	45
Works Cited.....	47

Abstract

"Israeli Arab", how humiliating is this name no matter how many will try to soften it. And frankly, it makes no difference if we call ourselves instead "Palestinian citizens of Israel" or even "the Palestinian minority"...Whatever specific name is used, the underlining message remains the same: "Israeli Arab" - an oxymoron.

- Sayed Kashua, (So Humiliating Is This Name)

As an Arab-Israeli, author Sayed Kashua asks the important questions: whether the indigenous Arabs of Israel are permitted to consider Israel as their home. The author shades light into the subaltern lives of the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli citizens in the ethnocratic Israel, where one's national and ethnic identity collide. The contemporary Hebrew writer narrates the socio-political situation of the community along with its social segregation and hierarchy, the duality of identity, and the politics of language and narratives. Kashua comments as well as criticises the state of Israel, Arab world and Arab mentality and annihilates the established stereotypes in a profoundly personal but anecdote manner. This thesis investigates Kashua's book *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning* from the lenses of historical past, to study and analyse the unfamiliar stories of the Arab minority in Israel affected by the endless Palestinian-Israel conflict in the light of literary and critical theory.

Epigraph

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself.
No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then
I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become
mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still
colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk.

(bell hooks, 'Marginality as a site of resistance', 1990: 241–3)

Introduction:

Our entry into the postmodern age has introduced a drastic transformation in the ways our world works. As Mark Currie states, the meaning of postmodern is difficult to be “nailed down” to a particular definition, as there is no difference between the words modernist and postmodernist, in the “conceptual instability of the word modernist” (1). To understand postmodernism, one has to understand the prospects of modernism. In order to make sense of the situation, modernism can be marked as the breakers of tradition, in a contrasting direction, postmodernism is the celebrators of differences. The preceding century of postmodernism had great political significance; one of them was the revolution in the world history through the failing status quo of the monarchies, and aristocratic powers. Moreover, the postmodernist times has seen a different dimension of history with the inquisition of the colonial discourses and its extensive domination over nations and races. At the same time, the decolonisation process took place amid the natives of the subdued lands, challenging the imperialist rhetoric. The postmodern world has witnessed the digital revolution with innovative developments, which assisted people of minorities, and non-elite background to have a platform to advocate their thoughts and ideas in a democratic form, as the lines between the mainstream media and social media are fading. In this contemporary times, artistic and literary domains have alleviated censorship for the micronarratives, marginalised concepts to be explored and narrated; in contrast the end of stereotypical standardised productions of art and culture. Harmoniously, the concepts of diversity and representation are vocalised by the progressive, democratic world that claims to be culturally conscious of different societies around them. Therefore, a widespread understanding is that, postmodernity affiliates itself with diversity, moreover the forms of individuality, agency and identities. As it is evident, a definite wave of change is apparent in the everyday socio-politico-economic situation of the postmodern life. However, with all the progress and advances of the postmodern world, history often repeats

itself. We see the repetition of the past, as in the rise of neo-colonial powers, inspired with the fundamentals of the old world, with the intention to dominate minorities that have just recently emerged under the eyes of the modern world.

In the field of literature, Modern literature has been known for the rebellious end of the structures of the pre-twentieth century literature touchstones through the avant-garde works. Postmodern literature has been equally influenced by the modern workings and has successfully shifted from the known modernist paradigm with distinctive attributes in contrast to other genres. As a result of that, postmodern texts tend to be metafictional that mend the barrier of fiction and reality, interrogations the centre and the periphery with an intense self-conscious manner. The works often categorised in the literary term, as Linda Hutcheon coined it, as “historiographic metafiction” that questions the philosophy of history, problems of reality, and the knowability of the past, which draws attention to the artificiality of historical representation and the narrative devices that shape historical material (Currie 3). Furthermore, postmodern literature believes in the end of the “super narratives” that were created to “smother difference, oppositions and plurality”, as Lyotard famously defines it, and further rewrites and replaces it with “mini-narratives” (Barry 83). Moreover, postmodern writings are concerned with the world of simulation or “the loss of the real” that came with the bombardment of images in everyday life and commodification that resulted in a culture of hyperrealism in our world (Barry 84). Therefore, with such nature, postmodernist literature has created a stage of opportunities for the marginalized to write the version of the truth that was lost behind dominant narratives.

i) Postmodern Minority Discourse and Identity Crisis:

In the light of postmodernist writings, a new discourse has emerged over the decades, known as the minority discourse that focuses on the stories of marginalised voices of society

who are discriminated in the numerous context of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality or religion. As a result, there has been an escalation of postcolonial, feminist, queer, ethnic-racial writings, which are prominent in the contemporary literary canon. JanMohamed and Lloyd explains it as,

The effort of critical minority discourse to produce social and cultural formations genuinely tolerant of difference and, even more so, its project of critiquing those dominant structures which tend to reduce the human to a single universal mode, account for its apparent affinities to poststructuralism and post-modernism (16).

Minority literature interrogates, analyses, and subverts the centre narrative and uncovers the tools that establishes power dynamics between the majority and the minority. In addition, Deleuze and Guattari introduces the “minor literature” and explains it as a literature which is not of “a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language” (16). Furthermore defined by Deleuze and Guattari that the particular genre of literature deterritorialises the dominant language, from the perspective of “the individual and the political” with the “collective arrangement of utterance” (18). Therefore it shifts the focus from the centre onto the narratives of peripheries; features which Deleuze and Guattari similarly find in the revolutionary works of Kafka, Joyce and Beckett (19). In the postmodern literature, the narratives of the centre is confronted by authors such as Native American writer N. Scott Momaday, whose work *The Man Made of Words* (1997) portrays the identity crisis of the natives as a result of oppression of the European colonisers. Ábel Anita says that, the Native American identity is coherent to the land and the oral tradition of the aboriginals of America. As for them, the tribe is the essence and “center of the universe”, it goes so far that, “the memory of the land is part of their culture. Tribal history is built upon the stories told about the land” (5). For the Native Americans, land and language play a significant part as the marker of

their identity and existence. However, in order to convert that identity for political advantage, the imperialist powers imposed their language and education to fulfil the colonial agenda. Hirschfelder points that, colonisers imposed the transformation with the mantra “Kill the Indian and save the man”, to end the indigenous identity of the natives to complement them with the expanding white society in America (qtd in Ábel 7). For that, the new learnings of the natives turned in to a failed attempt of imitation of the White Man, further prolonging the crisis of identity, and N. Scott Momaday questions the structures of the colonising process. Parallel political agenda of the oppressor is found in Gloria Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). The book is a widely celebrated for its contributions in diversifying the school of feminist thought and its comments on the identity crisis of the marginalised Chicano-Americans. Because of the circumstances, as Anzaldua refers in her writings, the solution for the alienation of identity is with the formation of the “new mestiza” that creates a third identity in the collisions of- the centre and periphery. However, similar crisis is witnessed in the works of minority literatures of Africans and African-Americans. In *Things Fall Apart* (1987) by Chinua Achebe, the writer talks about the imperialist agenda of the white man and the imposition of Christianity in the African Igbo society. Through the penetration of colonial belief and culture, the Igbo people turned against one another. Furthermore fuelling the discrimination and division among the Igbo kin, which resulted with Achebe’s hero Okonkwo’s death and deliberate demise of the Igbo culture. In Alice Walker's short fiction "The Welcome Table" in *In Love & Trouble* (1973), it tells a story of an unnamed protagonist, a woman of colour that failed to draw any sort of empathy from the surrounded white community. Alice H. Petry describes, The aged working class woman, a Christian in faith, never found herself accepted into the local church she desired to be part of; even though Christianity teaches that all believers are equal, but then she was excluded from the place, as it was a “white church” (14). The story displays that churches have “colours” or racial divisions that discriminates

African American people from the rest. Walker portrays America, where white supremacy lingers in the core of everything, and skin colour decides whose worth is what. Another work worth noting is *God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy that talks about the Syrian Christian minority of Kerala, India. Although being Christians and a minority, the descendants of Assyrian people assimilated their cultural practices with the Hindu Caste System. The Christian minority treated the lower caste Hindus or Paravanas as inferior people, as they were considered as the bottommost in the Hindu caste spectrum. The temperaments towards the “lower class” remained unchanged regardless their conversion to Christianity, despite the efforts to escape the curse of caste. Therefore, the “untouchables” forever remained the lowest of the low in the society, and faced injustice from the superior classes, as per as the fate of Velutha in the name of false honour and justice.

ii) Arab-Israelis, the Unfamiliar Minority

As Edward Said writes in his *The Question of Palestine*, the British mandate’s Balfour Declaration has deceitfully legitimised Palestine’s the colonisation by the European Zionist supremacists (15). Palestinians are the victims of the same power that was once established to end Christian Europe’s anti-Semitism towards its Jewish minority. From Said’s concept of “the orient”, he says, Arabs always have been considered ‘Oriental’, therefore seen as “less human and valuable than Europeans and Zionists” (28). The Zionist narrative was able to make Europe understand the position of the Arabs-Palestine in the language of colonisation. Therefore, were licensed and appreciated for “European Jews hewing a civilization of sweetness and light out of the black Islamic sea” which was far away from the mainland (25). Said remarks that the, “world has not been concerned with what the enterprise meant in loss, dispersion, and catastrophe for the Palestinian natives” (xiii), particularly in the matter of Muslim-Arab minority after 1948, who were detached from the main community and strictly under the control, surveillance and restraintment of the Israeli government (36).

Taking everything in account, in the discussion of postmodern minority literature, I would like to refer to a renowned Israeli magazine article where Debra Kamin introduces the contemporary Arab-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua as the “The Greatest Living Hebrew Writer Is Arab” (*The Towers*). The article further compares the best-selling Israeli writer and journalist as “a gentile living among the chosen people, the outsider who has burrowed his way into the fold”. Needless to say, it intends to the author’s minority status in the Israeli community. There is a clear dichotomy between the words in the statement: Hebrew vs Arab, and the Gentile or non-Jew/outsider vs the chosen people. The language and race in this example are represented as the principal part of an individual’s identity description. In some way, an Arab writing in Hebrew is meant to be paradoxical; to the extent that their coherency must seem absurd in general. Without acknowledging the Arab/ Palestinian population as one of the Israeli’s own and accepting their presence in Israeli society, the identity of Arab-Israeli will forever remain in a limbo. On one occasion, the Arab-Hebrew writer Kashua was questioned by an Israeli-Jew as why he expresses criticism of Israel, despite being successful within the “secular Israeli Jewish elite”; because, on the contrary, he should be grateful. The author clarified his position saying:

That’s one of the things I wanted to escape from Israel—not being considered as a citizen...That the ‘be thankful despite your position’ is such a humiliating issue when it comes to minorities. ‘Be thankful’ ‘you can’t compare yourself’...It...was so painful for someone who thought he was a citizen.
(Moment Magazine)

As seen in the pages of history, the conflicts of the Palestinian and Israeli societies are going on for more than half a century. Nevertheless, one of the most conflicting identity is of the Arab-Israelis, as the natives of Israel experience the crisis of identity in a similar means to the minorities discussed as mentioned previously. This thesis concentrates on the identity crisis

of the marginalized Arab-Israeli minority in *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning* voiced by one of many Arab-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua. Kashua's books *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning*, translated by Miriam Shlesinger in the English language, mirrors the minority status of the Arab-Israeli in everyday Israel over the space of fiction with an anecdote tone. Although the ethnocratic state of Israel claims to be a democratic nation in the Middle Eastern region, it practices apartheid and separatist policies towards particular minorities in the community. *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning* ludicrously critic the separatist ideology of the nation in the spectrum of language, race and culture that further alienates the Arab-Israeli community from the mainstream majority and their Palestinian legacy. For that reason, assimilation of the Arabs in Israeli society is challenging and sometimes can be seem as impossible. The books concentrate on the minority status of the natives who are struggling to find their voices and narrate the minority Arab's experience in the ethnically- dominated Israeli society. Despite all the adversities the Israeli-Arab face, the Author Sayed Kashua has some stories to tell to the unconcerned world.

Chapter 1:

Language in *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning*

Saenz-Badillos says, “The use of Hebrew as a spoken language was to be for Ben-Yehuda one of the most important aspects of the new plan for settlement in Palestine” (269). Ben-Yehuda, a Russian diaspora Jew and lexicographer agreed that Hebrew and Zionism were inseparable, and believed the language can only revive if only they can “revive the nation and return it to the fatherland” (Balint, 2008). The Zionist ideology of a nation only for Jewish people can be described as an “Imagined Community”, coined by the political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson, as it consists people who share a sense of nationalism and kinship with others with same sentiments (6). In the Ottoman Palestine, Jews immigration in the land from different Diasporas triggered confusion among people, as they lacked anything in common except for their Jewish faith. Despite the shared sentiments for Israeli nation-state and Zionist agenda, communication was difficult among its new inhabitants. (Saenz-Badillos 270). Therefore, the need for a common language occurred for the diverse Jewish communities. So, with the assistance of British mandate, Zionists were able to establish Hebrew as the official language, which had only menial use as a lingua franca among native and immigrant Jews; that not only lead to the rebirth of a dead Semitic language, but also marked as the return of a language that symbolised the Jewishness of Israel. Hence, in independent Israel, the “Modern Hebrew”, revived the ancient myths of the ‘chosen people’ and reflected the new narratives of the returned Israelis (Saenz-Badillos 273). Thus, the Jewish nationalisation or Israelisation of the Palestinian lands occurred with the Hebrew language, even before its independence as a state; revoking the known languages and narratives of the pre-existing Palestinian natives.

There are many Arab writers in Israel i.e. Atallah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas, who wrote in Arabic and Hebrew as a minority resisting Israel's colonising authority (Feldhay Brenner 102). On the other hand, Sayed Kashua is known as one of the best contemporary Hebrew writer in Israel. As an author, the Arab-Israeli writer Kashua's narrative style can be termed as metafiction, a writing that questions if something is fiction or real, and his works can be related with American novelist Tim O'Brien, whose writing according to Naparsteck, "resists any kind of categorization: it is part novel, part of collection of stories, part essays, part journalism; it is more significantly, all at the same time (Calloway 250). It is possible that Kashua's profession as a journalist has affected his writing. As we see the ambient, journalistic tone of the author in description of chaotic events in his book *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning*. Kashua's writing consists of dark humour, similarly in the comic realism of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which provokes the readers' thought process with humour in the case of debatable policies of Israel. The first person narrators in Kashua's books often discontinue their narratives and shift to the accounts of the minor characters to state provocative testimonial about history and life in the Jewish state. It can be interpreted as the narrator's defence mechanism from prosecution, as Israel is known for its strict censorship of any kind of government criticism, especially from the non-Jewish minorities. The writings autobiographical element and the characters' paranoia in the books, exhibitions the inner conflict and identity crisis of the Arab citizen of Israel. Peres Ben-Rafael notes Arabs in Israel have "complex identities that are both in congruence and in conflict with one another, reflecting the internal conflicts to which Israeli Arabs are exposed." (Shimony 147). Sayed Kashua's grandfather was the first generation Israeli Arab that only spoke Palestinian-Arabic and were against the Zionist colonising forces in the establishment of Israel in 1948. His father the second generation of Arab Israelis, who witnessed the upsurge of the state and the illegal occupation of Palestinian Territories in 1967. Kashua born in the year 1975, came of age with

Hebrew as the principal means of communication and education that made him part of a generation who lacked any familiarity with the crisis of colonisation, and solely grew up as Arab-Israeli, assimilated with the hyphenated dual identity in the Jewish state of Israel. Kashua claims his education in the Jewish school made Hebrew his default language, and writing in Arabic is impossible as he is alien to the literary Arabic form (Shimony 150). Kashua's writing in the Hebrew language can be interpreted as his calling out his generation's and the Israeli Arab community's identity crisis.

Learning Hebrew

According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe" (4). Language defines people and connects them with their own identity and the world. The nameless protagonist in *Dancing Arab* first realised as a child the importance of learning Hebrew when he encountered his father's name in the newspaper under the list of suspects who bombed the Hebrew University cafeteria. Because he was an Arab child who only spoke Arabic, and in progress learning basics of Hebrew; not able to read the paper made him feel inferior, and the Arabic language failed to decipher the paper or the universe. Therefore, inner conflict activated, hence a transition from the native language to the colonisers' language happens from that vulnerable age. As Kashua writes in his *Let It Be Morning* "Third grade... that's when they start learning Hebrew" (81). The "faded passport photo" of his young father in the several newspaper clippings encouraged the narrator to investigate his father's mysterious past and made him believe Hebrew is the language to know information and furthermore knowledge. As a result, Kashua's young protagonist proclaimed that "I made up my mind: I've got to learn Hebrew. I've got to be able to read a Hebrew newspaper" (8), which is his initial attempt to assimilate himself with the Hebrew language. In *Let It Be Morning*, Kashua represents another side of language; while in

the time of the Second Intifada or Palestinian uprising against Israel, his unnamed narrator, an Israeli-Arab, found himself under heavy surveillance and scrutiny as if he is one of the perpetrators of the revolt. Fanon states when a colonised puts end to his narcissism that he is no better than “the other animals”, only then he will understand that he is nothing in the coloniser's eyes; he will realise where he belongs and finally has balance (12). He narrates how being an “outsider” and his given “language” qualified him for his journalist position that assured him that he belonged somewhere in Israeli society. Nevertheless, all changed in his “safe haven” as soon as circumstances were unstable in the territories, as the Israelis began to consider him as a treat. The narrator claims, the language of his reports were “changed beyond recognition”, moreover he realised his position is always of a partial criminal. He states,

“Every sentence I wrote was inspected, every word double-checked...required to provide an explanation for every piece of information I submitted. I learned the rules soon enough...sticking to the assignment, as I was told. I adopted the lingo of the military reporters: terrorists, attacks, terrorism, criminal acts. (20)

The situation was so critical that in order to survive he then adapted the narrative and jargon used against Arabs, Palestinians by the majority Israeli and silenced himself of any sort of opinions. The reason is that “The privilege of criticizing government policy was an exclusively Jewish prerogative. I was liable to be seen as a journalist calling for the annihilation of the Zionist state” (20). In Fanon's idea, that the Negro or colonised have to face criticism as soon as he opens his mouth citing anything just or intelligible, as the reaction of every coloniser will be same, that “We have brought you up to our level and now you turn against your benefactors”(23). The narrator then witnesses conflicting effects using the terrorist lingos of the military on other Israeli-Arabs, as they are influenced of anti-Palestinian narrative that changes the perception of Palestinian living in the territories with whom they share identity and heritage outside Israeli boundaries. Mark Currie imply this kind of narrative exclusion or

modification is political in nature, and narrative exclusion collaborates with systemic exclusion, therefore it not only excludes certain powerless people from representation but from economic and political power (85). As some Arab-Israeli condemn the language saying, “Shame on you, calling them terrorists....Are we going to start calling them terrorists too?” (73). The transformed perception of Arab-Israelis showcase that they reject the Palestinian part of their identity and possessed in the metanarratives of the Israeli society. Thus portraying a crisis in Arab-Israeli identity that neither is accepted in the Israeli identity, nor it desires to be part of Palestinian identity. The narrator in *Dancing Arab* is seen slowly conforming to the Jewish-Israeli way of life after he was ridiculed for his heavy Arabic dialect in the prestigious Israeli boarding school, furthermore his Arabness that reflected in his identity. As in the Arabic language, there is no “P” sound, the narrator constantly pronounced words wrong in Hebrew with a “B” sound. He was incompetent in proper Israeli table manners or unaware of bands like “Beatles” and any other pop cultural or musical references of urban Israel. The boarding school kids harassed him as he behaved and sounded like every other stereotypical Arabs they hear or see in the television screens (93). As said by, Fanon a similar scenario is seen in a black colonised man when he visits the colonisers and hears them say how the colonised fails to speak properly,

“He will become aware of it, and he will really go to war against it. He will practice not only rolling his *R* but embroidering it. Furtively observing the slightest reactions of others, listening to his own speech, suspicious of his own tongue—a wretchedly lazy organ—he will lock himself into his room and read aloud for hours—desperately determined to learn *diction*” (11).

The situation in the new school left the narrator humiliated, because of that, his “otherness” or distinctive characteristics became a condescending part of his identity. As a result, he felt petrified and inferior, therefore went through a transition phase, where he began to conceal his

Arab identity in public. In order to appear “Jewish”, he took advice from his teachers to change his pronunciation, even though other Arab students like Adel saw his attempts to sound Jewish as absurd. Moreover, remarked that Hebrew is a “screwed-up language”, it failed to reassure the narrator from his insecurities. In *Let It Be Morning, Despite*, the narrator’s friend Yossi held prejudices against Arabs, as he “found it hard to say the word Arab, because it sounded like a curse”, the narrator saw his friendship with Yossi as an achievement and remained friends with him. (211). These instances confirms the degrading values and narratives of Arab language, image; furthermore polarising his authentic system of thought resulting in alienation, identity crisis, and prioritising Jewishness over Arabness in identity.

Education of the minority

In the twelfth grade, the narrator discovered what he, a native, was considered in his birth state as a minority; “Arabs in Israel are called a minority” (117). In a little time, he found out the polar narratives of Arabs and Jews that contradicted each other’s legitimacy. For the Arabs 1948 stands as the year of Nakba or Catastrophe, as Palestinians were forced out of their homes and some were considered as refugees, but for the Jews, it is a time of independence, the year of Israel’s certified existence. In civics and Jewish history classes he learnt that Arabs are wrong, as Zionism is not a curse or a curse word, but a philosophy that idolises the idea of Jewish “national homeland”, reminisces the Jews “two thousand years of exile” and condemns “anti-Semitism”. The school teaches the historical wars of the Jews against the Arabs and the British for their independence and the establishment of Israel; a statement the narrator assumed was possibly fictitious as “the English wanted the Jews here”. As Lyotard describes, over time narratives take the form of myth and defines what has right to be said and done in a culture (Jim Powell 25). The young narrator then realised the Arabs and Jews are not only dissimilar

in language, culture or religion but also in ideology and history. Ngugi says, for a colonial child, the harmony existing between acknowledged language and narratives come to be irretrievably damaged,

This resulted in the disassociation of the sensibility of that child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe -was always the centre of the universe. (17)

The school introduced the protagonist that the dichotomy of Arab and Jewish identities was significantly opposing than anything near to harmonious. Furthermore, establishing permanent alienation from his Arab society, making it seem like the enemy and full of “bad people”.

In *Let It Be Morning*, The narrator visits his wife, she is teaching the 4th-grade students about the “*halutzim*, the Jewish pioneers”, the same thing that they. He wonders if the students know what they are learning about. He says,

I doubt the children know who those *halutzim* were. I had never understood they were Jewish immigrants. It was never stated in so many words. I was convinced they were wise heroes that all of us ought to admire. (L 83)

He later thinks that there is a possibility that even his wife is unaware that “the pioneers were Jewish immigrants”. He assumes that his wife does not have any clue about the Jewish National Fund that she praises or the same way she might admire her college founder Berl Katznelson as “a hero and an exemplary educator”. As “she just accepts what the books say at face value” or the mandatory requirement to learn about Jewish contribution, with the exclusion of Arab presence in history without any questions as everyone (83-4). As Ismael Abu-Saad says

“In Jewish school, there is clearly a strong emphasis on the development of national identity, active belonging to the Jewish people, and furthering of

Zionist aspirations...Where the curriculum includes references to Palestinian Arabs, it generally tends to portray them and their culture in a negative light...Palestinian Arab students are required to spend many class hours in the study of Jewish culture and history and the Hebrew language... Thus, they are required to develop identification with Jewish values and further Zionist aspirations at the expense of the development of their own national awareness and sense of belonging to their own people” (64-5).

Therefore the colonisers’ language not only separates the children from their identity, but it is a systematic process, parallel to Macaulay’s education system that colonises the natives minds that reflects master’s narratives “in taste, in opinion, in moral, and in intellect” without possessing the threat of outclassing the master (249). The education system in Israel distorts history and reality of the Arab presence, consequently produces a disassociation, divorce,, or alienation for the colonised child and deters them from their natural environment as they began to consider the settlers language as the true carrier and replicator of culture (Ngugi 17). Therefore the colonised relates to the coloniser's ethos and one’s own heritage cease to define them. Another dimension of education is to provide relevance and position to individuals in a society. Receiving the opportunity to study in the prestigious Israeli boarding school, the unnamed narrator’s father in *Dancing Arab* hoped that he will be the first Arab to build atom bombs. The narrator was enlightened by Adel that, “even if he were the smartest person in the world, they’d never let him study that kind of thing. There are some things an Arab can never become” (106). Abu-Saad elaborates that, many Arab students who might... “Have academic or professional aspirations are barred from higher education-the point at which the unequal Jewish and Arab school systems converge” and they are targeted by “an examination system established in a manner that favors Jewish students” over Arab one (71). When the former teacher of the narrator expressed hope that the present Arab students in *Let It Be Morning* will

find the same success as he achieved; narrator's false appearance of success pained and embarrassed him. For the fact that his journalist profession was his last resort, as his score on the psychometric exam prevented him from applying to medical school or law school (82). As Ismael Abu-Saad explains it is impossible for Arab students to get into respectable study programs, because of the discrimination, which can be further transparent from the statement of an Israeli former Advisor of Arab Affairs. That says,

Our policy towards the Arabs is to keep them illiterate by preventing the Arab students from reaching the universities. If they were educated, it would be difficult to rule them. We should make them wood-cutters and water-carriers (71).

For that reason, even after many years it not bizarre to find non-flattering narratives in children's Hebrew books that still portray Arabs position in Israeli society as peasants and farmers (*Dancing* 207), or without a university education, Arabs alternative option is to become factory workers (*Let it be* 81)

Hiding the Arab Identity

In the mature phase of life, the protagonist in *Dancing Arab* complains about his wife, who fails to understand or give a "second thought" speaking in Arabic in "a crowded elevator or at the entrance to the mall, when we're being processed through the metal detector" (204) or her insisting on talking to their baby in Arabic around public places. The narrator feels uncomfortable with his wife's defiance, as he believes they should not stand out in front of others with their Arabness, instead should mimic the Jewish identity and blend in with the rest. It is no impossible that the narrator assumes, the Arabs who speak in the native language among Jews will be considered "savages". He assumes the Jews will consider Hebrew speakers

civilized than the Arabic speakers. If Israeli Arabs speak Arabic, “those will be considered farther away from the white man” or far from being Israeli (Fanon 15). Moreover, this “self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question” (Fanon 8). To hide his identity even in the privacy of his home, the narrator speaks to his house helps who might be Arabs in the Hebrew language instead of Arabic (202). He hesitates when his or wife’s name is called in hospital visits and pretends it is not him. As he says when a situation like this happens, “I don’t get up right away, as if it isn’t really my name, or as if it might be my name but they’ve copied it wrong in reception. So wrong in fact that it took on a new religion and nationality” (203). The moment of his inferiority complex and embarrassment is evident when Arab women ask for his assistance in a hospital, and he finds himself in a compromising position unable to hide his Arab identity. In that situation, instead of helping, he finds himself in a dilemma, having an inner exchange as for why they are taking to him in Arabic if his Arabness is so obvious in his outer persona. He contemplates if he should answer them in Hebrew as usual, as often “Arabs turn to me in Hebrew, and I answer them in Hebrew, because how should I know they’re Arabs? True, you can tell, but if they didn’t recognize me, maybe I could pretend not to recognize them either (205). The narrator feels violated, that how he was exposed despite “appearing like a Jew” (91), however, the sentiment can be translated by Fanon, “it is just this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivising him, decivilizing him, that makes him angry” (20). However, in the end, he finally whispers in Arabic that they should ask the nurses and points towards the nurses’ station. This event tormented the narrator as he could feel his “face on fire” ashamed to reveal himself in public and tries to conceal his embarrassment hiding behind his book (205). Moreover, the circumstances have forced him to expose his mask, his perfect Jewish masquerade in front of others. The situation, redirects us to Fanon; as he claims, that the black man or colonised man has two dimensions in his

personality. One that he enacts with his own people, and the other one in front of the white man or coloniser (8). The narrator's recognition of his Arabness has made him vulnerable and exposed among his colonisers, which feeds to his inferior complex.

Land and Language

Language and land has an indistinct relationship between them, so in the case of land and its people. In the discourse of colonisers, their relation with the land is new, so as the relationship between the coloniser's language and the land. Therefore, "the language itself already carries many associations with... experience and so can never be 'innocent' in practice" (Ashcroft et al, *The Empire* 134). In the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, the independent state of Israel confiscated lands that belonged to the natives. Palestinians as Edward Said explains, "identified itself with the land it tilled and lived on... wholly European decision was made to resettle, reconstitute, recapture the land for Jews who were to be brought there from elsewhere (7); and further claims the Jewish settlement could have ended up in South America and East Africa but later on reconsideration occurred, as it as convenient enough to portray "Palestine both as a backward, largely uninhabited territory and as a unique historical privilege could reconstitute the land into a Jewish homeland (*The Question Of Palestine* 22). Kashua's *Dancing Arab* marks the Arab not only talks about the coloniser's prosecution of the native language, but Arab-Israelis struggle to own a piece of land to call home. The grandmother narrates the stories, "There's no land. Go away.... he pointed a gun at her chest" (54). Whatever land remained, as the situation in the village reached to the point that, everyone fought hard for every centimetre of land that they could get. But the always-victor-but-bleeding grandmother "gets up, bares her fingernails, and fights for her land. What the Jews took from her was bad enough" (52). She ordered her son, to stand up for his rights, as the he who "Can't protect his land", "doesn't

appreciate its value” (53). The Narrator’ father was once a supporter of Soviet powers as he was wishful with the stories how a “Russian banged his shoe on the table at the United Nations and threatened the United States and Israel” (54). However, that hope shattered with the changing times, his “Marx and Lenin” books were replaced by “yellow pages in Hebrew and Arabic”. He realise that “they’re liable to take away even the land we still have left” (55); it would be better to die- to protect the land rather than escaping as refugees like the rest of the village, scolds his sons that “None of you is going to stay to defend the land” (55). He wished his sons knew the value of their land. Because the land that is part of their identity and manifestation of their existence in Israel. In the dystopian world of *Let It be Morning*, to everyone’s surprise, there is peace between Israel and Palestinian. Israel promises to dismantle the settlements and return the occupied lands back to Palestinian authority, so that finally, the refugees will have the chance to go back home (261). The narrator is ecstatic with the peace treaty, as it will improve not only Israel and Palestinian relationship but also the relationship between Jews and Israeli-Arabs; at the time of Second Intifada, things went downhill for the Israeli-Arab citizens. He exclaims “we’re not going to have to feel suspicious, we’ll go back to being almost-citizens” (260). However, things came crumbling down as the narrator saw his village transferred to the Palestinian authority. Therefore a new paranoia developed; as years of assimilation of in the Israeli society, altering Arabness with Jewish identity, learning the Hebrew language: however meant nothing. Israeli-Arabs long quest to belong ended, as they are thrown among people who have become stranger to them after so many years of physical and psychological separation. They do not share familiar language, customs or identity because of the alienation fashioned by the coloniser, thus shaping another marginalised, displaced people for called Arab-Israelis. Said says,

No human being should be threatened with “transfer” out of his or her home or land; no human being should be discriminated against because he or she is not

of an X or a Y religion; no human being should be stripped of his or her land, national identity, or culture, no matter the cause (xvi)

Kashua's *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning* emphasize on the idea that the Palestinians were never allowed to have a home because of the settlers. Similarly the Israeli Arabs will never allowed to be part of the Israeli society. It is a constant in-between-ness of a community that is both rejected by both Palestinian and Israel.

Chapter 2:

Race in *Dancing Arabs* and *Let It Be Morning*

Race is a cataloguing process that notes the distinctness of different group of people. According to *the Key Concepts*, race imply as a term that indicates the mental, moral, as well as the individual personality, and furthermore the “ knowledge of origin provides the satisfactory account of behaviour” (Ashcroft et al, *The Key* 218). Moreover, Race can be associated with “a political identity, a self-identity, a cultural identity and a source of great personal and group strength” (Leiderman et al 32). Racial identity is considered as healthy signifier of individual agency. However, the colonialist powers use the notion of race to dominate the victims of colonisation and validate the colonial discourse. Furthermore, the racial discrimination witnessed in our society for the majority of the time is the outcome of the colonial program (Ashcroft et al. *The Key* 58). Moreover, racial discrimination is not the only kind of discrimination that the minority endure, as McLeod elaborates, there is another aspect of human identity, which is known as ethnicity. He further explains that,

Race and ethnicity are not synonymous both can be used as the grounds for discrimination. Members of particular ethnic group or races might find themselves disqualified from certain positions of power. An individual's ethnicity can provide an invaluable sense of belonging to a particular group in the present and also to a tradition or inheritance of cultural or historical tendencies. The potential use of ethnicity and racial difference are variable over time and space. (110)

In the case of settler colonialism of Israel, “the Palestinians in Israel did not immigrate to the new system; rather, the system was imposed on them resulting in the destruction of their society and the disposition of the rest of their people” furthermore as Rouhana says “the Jewish-Zionist

nature of the state of Israel exposes its Palestinian citizens to an inherent conflict between their national identity as Arab-Palestinians and their civic status as Israeli citizens (Makkawi 24).

Arab Surveillance

Sayed Kashua explains the difficult life of Arab-Israelis under Israeli surveillance with his books narrators' experiences. The village life of the narrator in *Dancing Arab* held him in reserve from the unfamiliar everyday city life of the Arab-Israelis. As Arabs were held accountable for even visiting Israeli areas of the Jewish majority. Ilan Peleg says that, "the Israeli authorities generally regarded the Arab minority as a threat... a group that would join Israel's enemies in any future war. This negative attitude was reflected in hostile policies toward the minority" (417). The narrator experienced the situation in real life, when he was asked to get down from the bus, on his way home from the Israeli School. The incident left him scarred and paranoid, "A soldier got on and told me to get off. I cried like crazy. I'd never felt so humiliated" (91). Kashua portrays segregation and racism towards the Arabs in *Dancing Arabs*, which promotes the culture of bullying Arab children in school by their Jewish Israeli peers. The narrator in the book is seen experiencing segregation by his classmates, as they avoided sitting and even acknowledging him and Adel, the Arab kids, in the bus (95). And the situation was much worse with the Polanski kids, who are of European descent and looked "different from the ones at our school, and Adel and I don't look like any of them" (96). The narrator was frightened, but pretended that they would not hurt him. As a matter of fact, Jews find him timid and conformist. However, things turned dark, as

"The kids across from us are whispering, laughing, repeating the names of our villages and deliberately mispronouncing them. They're laughing at our names, and we don't do anything about it... I keep quiet. They start singing...
"Mohammed is dead....some of their classmates join in. I press the STOP

button.... I'm getting off... controlling myself, holding back my tears.... One of the students opens a window and spits. He misses us (97)

At this point, Kashua shows the connection between racism and bullying and the way it is used to intimidate minorities. Permitting bullying can nurture racial discriminatory nature in kids can lead to racist adults. With the narrator's emotional breakdown, Adel shouts as why the narrator thinks, "that 'the same thing won't happen on the next bus...'" (98). The anxious narrator lost his direction on the road but he was glad that the racist episode is over, as the risk of getting lost is not as frightening as the thought of being humiliated by the bullying Polanski kids. After the instance, on the way to home, Israeli military once again made him and Adel get down from the bus. By this time the narrator felt extremely humiliated for being Arab that he refused to get on and endure the disgraceful routine of Arab surveillance. As a result, he "cried like a baby. I broke down. Even the soldier felt uneasy. He said it was just routine" (99). After that, the narrator's Father furiously "says 'Are you crazy? What's got into you? Is that something to cry about?'" (10). The father knew about the surveillance in the cities of Israel, it is a compulsory for Arab-Israelis be search and questioned if they arrive in Jewish majority area. Therefore instructions his son to accept it as an everyday routine, because Arabs in Israel are required to have a thick skin to ignore humiliation. For a matter of fact, Racism is not always about superiority but privilege and power. Leiderman et al, says that "a group must have power in order to use racism to maintain its privileges. And, simultaneously, groups stay in power most effectively when their accumulated privileges allow them to dominate the institutions that control the distribution of power" (32). The Narrator further reminiscences, if he was reminded of the Israeli school's smell, left him paralysed. He says, "it comes back to haunt me: the smell of a different world... I spent three years there, and I never got used to it. That smell remained foreign to me" (91). The only thing that kept him going was Adel's presence in the school, an Arab student "just seeing him there kept me going" (93). While

visiting his home on holidays, he wished and prayed that his family will understand his situation and let him stay home. He says “it’s a different world, and I can’t live there” (94).

Mimicking the Jewish Identity

The narrator in *Dancing Arab* experienced one incident where he was recognised in the bus and was asked to identify himself, because the Arabs are always considered as threats to the Israeli security. After the humiliating experience, he adapted to the Jewish-Israeli identity, stripping off his Arabness, and becoming an expert on “assuming false identities” (91). Fanon says that “Every colonized people... every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality...his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (9). The nameless narrator always felt like, to look like as an average Jew is an achievement. It is an indication that he is now seen as civilised. Israelis often commented on his looks that he looks nothing like an Arab. Although, he says some may consider the comments as racist but the narrator considered them as complements. He says, “That’s what I’ve always wanted to be, after all: a Jew. I’ve worked hard at it, and I’ve finally pulled it off” (91). In the boarding school trip, the narrator was ashamed to see his old Arab schoolmates who were asking about his wellbeing. He says, “I wanted to dig a hole and hide”. As his Israeli classmates were curious to know if he was an acquaintance of them, as the Arab kids approached the narrator by name. He replied that “it was a common name among Arabs” (105), and surely the Arab kids misidentified him for someone else. Later on, he talks about his younger self feeling glad to leave his home Tira, the place he once regretted leaving. As he is now blending in the city life of Jerusalem, he resents home as he found his “new life” exciting (115). The narrator afterwards finishing his education, resented his return to Tira. He was

occupied with his inner identity conflict, as he hoped everyone in the neighbourhood has forgotten him, as he refuses to acknowledge anyone. He thinks wishfully that, “Maybe I’ve changed, and they won’t recognize me anymore” (129). As the narrator reached university he was pleased to make a Jewish friend after the end of boarding school. Despite, the narrator’s friend Yossi held prejudices against Arabs, He says “He marked a new period in my life and proved I didn’t have to be stuck with Arabs my whole life” (211). His statement shows how the narrator went through a transition phase and was estranged and unfair to his own individuality and the Arab-Israeli community, as he overestimated his Jewish appearance and his friendships, and loathed the companion of his own people. Makkawi says that, the Palestinians or Arabs in Israel are second class citizens in the colonial- apartheid Israeli state, where the Jewish majority “marginalize, exploit, and manipulate” the minority and their identity according to their preference (24). The sentiment that imposes the minority feel as an inferior, means that the majority recognises the position being superior in the racial binary. The narrator’s paranoia grew drastically as he turned older, he says his Camouflage efforts that lasted for so many years failed as soldiers began to notice him and asked him to identify himself. He exclaims, “Me they’re stopping? The youngest Arab ever to learn to pronounce a *p*? I have almost no accent. You can’t tell by looking at me....Even the Arabs mistake me for a Jew” (202). He questions his choice of marrying an Arab looking woman. “It must be my wife”, he says. “She’s somewhat Arab”. His further absurd thoughts reveal his inferiority complex with race and inner crisis when he wishes that while in public with his wife, “I hope people will assume she’s Moroccan or Iraqi, and that I’m a western Jew who likes eastern women” (202).

An Arab will always be an Arab

The narrator's father says in *Dancing Arab* that for the Jews, an Arab forever remains an Arab and, there is no way they will ever consider Arabs as friends. He says that,

The Jews can give you the feeling that you're one of them, and you can really like them and think they're the nicest people you've ever known, but sooner or later you realize you don't stand a chance. For them you'll always be an Arab.

(106)

The Father's words come true, as the narrator happily mimics the Jewish identity. The narrator's school friend Sagi was the first Jew who ever invited him home. At the dinner, Sagi introduced the narrator to his relative who just recently migrated from Argentina to Israel. Sagi interpreted the conversations, as the girl knew little Hebrew with a foreign accent, and she expressed how wonderful Israel suits her. The narrator felt strange that the new girl feels at home in Israel, a feeling that is alien to him. Furthermore, he naively thinks that she will change her mind if she ever encounters with the racist Polanski kids. Later on, as the conversation built, the narrator learned that she has "heard about Arabs and she's not afraid of them at all (111)". To contradict, Sagi said Arabs in his school are cool, the girl's replied that "she couldn't understand how we even agreed to study there, and that in her opinion, there was no such thing as a good Arab" (111). Sagi pointed out that the narrator "is an Arab", and the girl, "laughed and said it wasn't nice to say such a thing" about someone (111). The narrator realised the girl, possibly a person of colour, is as racist as the Polanski kids. Regardless of being a foreigner and without knowing Hebrew, the girl feels at home in Israel but the narrator is unwelcomed, even after being a native of the land. Kashua portrays the contradictions encountered by the marginalised, and the defenceless against "myths" of narratives; especially, the approval of the Arab stereotypes without any judgement. On the subject of these situations, Leiderman et al.

suggests, “many of the behaviors...[of] individuals that we call ‘patronizing’ are in fact forms of cultural racism (39). For Another example of the failed identity is when he fell in love with a Jewish girl named Naomi. The narrator reflects that he can sacrifice his beliefs to win her over. After resisting him for relatively some time, Naomi, later on, acknowledges the narrator’s love and accepts him knowing he is “not Jewish” but an Arab (114). Once his relationship with Naomi built, the narrator started to experience stronger connection to the Jewish life, which he was unable to do in his Arab village. In Fanonian language, it is an indication that loving the “white woman” proves the colonised that he is “worthy of white love”, furthermore he is now white; or in the narrator’s case, he possesses the Jewish identity (45). Afterwards, their relationship came to an end as her mother disapproved of Naomi’s relationship. Her mother at the beginning says that she did not mind that he was an Arab, “except it was too bad my name wasn’t Reuben or David” (112). The objection is so strong that Naomi’s mother later claims that she would “rather have a lesbian for a daughter than one who hangs out with Arabs” (124). He was heartbroken, and in that critical situation, the guidance counsellor advised him “to stop loving Naomi, or at least try to love Salwar, an Arab girl at school” (125). Kashua points out that the real world would care less if the narrator was a Jewish Arab or Mizrahi Jew, but being Arab and Muslim is not a great combination. However, Batiya Shimony, points out that, “the Arabness of the Mizrahi Jews and the non-Jewishness of the Arabs... These new categories of identities are threatening in that they “contaminate” the hegemonic category of a clean and homogenous Israeli identity, devoid of Arabs and Arabness (152). The narrator reads a book by an Arab-Israeli poet, where he wrote once he thought he could be a part of the Jewish world and recalls at one stage he believed he could truly blend in, but it was not the reality. The narrator relates to the poet, and feels like an idiot not believing his father and thought he could ever blend in the Israeli society (106). Again Fanon is relevant in the sense the colonised “inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle

with it unceasingly”, every act the colonised is a performance and “all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements” (14).

The Arab Mentality

In *Let It Be Morning*, Kashua shows the constant racist and uncomfortable environment in the cities can make life miserable for the Israeli Arabs. Despite that situation, the narrator in the book describes his wife feels more at ease in the Israeli cities compared to her hometown in the Arab village. He says,

She wasn't all that bothered that it had become uncomfortable just to walk down the street. She was willing to put up with graffiti calling for her deportation, for her death. She didn't notice how neighbors in the apartment building began looking at us differently.... She didn't show any signs of concern when someone sprayed the wall of our building with ARABS OUT = PEACE + SECURITY.
(17)

The wife treasured the idea of living far-off possible from the Arab villages, more than her love for city life. Kashua here attempts to point at the Arab mentality and the existing bigotry in the Arab villages. It is difficult for a woman to survive, especially to have independence. Because the gender power-dynamics are constantly practised by man to subdue and dominate the other. The narrator explains his wife's paranoia as she says, “‘you don't know the people there. You don't know what it's turned into' and 'you have no idea what people there can do to anyone who isn't one of them,' or 'How would you know? If you were a woman, things would be different'.” (17-8). Kashua writes about the menace and degrading social conditions for women in the villages. As per girls are getting engaged and married young, if is not for the Israeli law, the situation could have been worse. Girls are considered good if they ignore any kind of

approach or harassment from men in the streets; and if anyone looked or responded, they would be considered as “loose”, “lost cause” and “practically sluts”. The narrator was surprised with the numbers of covered girls, “I don’t remember a single girl wearing a veil when I was at school (16). Furthermore, some girls were considered as a catch, similar to the protagonist’s teacher wife, who went to colleges near the villages, as “they don’t have to stay away from home, and everyone knows what bed they slept in” (83). The protagonist in *Dancing Arabs* describes another part of reality. The narrator was once horrified with the impression that having premarital intercourse with his current wife will get him executed. Because it was considered as a disgrace in the Arab society; a non-virgin Arab girl is seen as damaged goods. No Arab men in the right mind would ever consider marrying someone non-virgin and if any mistakes happen, the bride will be sent home on her wedding night (142). Later in life, the narrator realises that “...I’d been duped. An Arab girl’s hymen wasn’t as holy and pure as people said it was” (166). Regarding his relationship, Jews in University were liberal and unconcerned with it. However, the Arabs in the dorms were masters of “gossiping and spreading rumours” (143), as the gossip reached home, the narrator decided to get married as he always intended to do. Nevertheless, another Arab social requirement was breached, as his small ceremony was considered in the village as “a shotgun wedding and we were just trying to avoid disgrace” (145). Therefore, the village expectation was met, as

So we got married all over again. The checks covered the hall, the music, the photographer, a thousand guests... I hardly even knew anyone at my own wedding....I was supposed to cut the cake and kiss men whose names I didn’t know. I had to hug my aunts and uncles and smile at the camera. I had to listen to horrible music that never fails to give me a headache. And I had to put up with all that without any alcohol or cigarettes (145-6).

Therefore, Kashua reflects on the social pressures, exploitation in the name of culture and customs in the Arab society, and the patriarchal system in the villages that judge women's honour based on her sexuality, and men based on their economical ability.

Gazazweh and Daffawiyya

The internalised racial treatment against the Palestinians in the territories by the Arab-Israelis can be witnessed in Kashua's *Dancing Arab*, as the young narrator explains that everyone hated the *Gazazweh*, or the Gaza people, especially the *Gazazweh* workers that came to the village for work. According to Donna K. Bivens victims of racism can be seen "projecting one's own sense of inferiority and inadequacy onto those of the same race" (39). The narrator says as a child he hated them too, only because he was taught to hate them. Moreover, the stereotypical stories of the *Gazazwehs* produced a distorted image of the people. Contrary to that, the narrator believed, "They looked to me like ordinary people, and they never bothered anyone" (18). And explains the position of Gaza people, that,

You'd only see them early in the morning when it was still dark outside, because they weren't supposed to be moving about in the daytime. They came to buy food, and then they'd vanish as if they'd never been there, as if there were no Gazazweh in the world (19).

In the *Let It Be Morning*, Kashua underlines the severity of the internal conflict amid the ethnic Arab-Palestinian community and the mistreatment of the worker from West Bank. As Homi K. Bhaba mentions "It is the peculiarity of regimes of racial oppression that they make immediately visible and vivid the more mediated and abstract practices of power such as class division, the exploitation of labor, and social hierarchies of status". (Bhaba, *Wretched* xx)

The works are depicted to be timid and frightened that, the narrator says, "If he hadn't answer my greeting, I'd have assumed he couldn't talk" (10). The worker's manager behaved as if he owns

the worker, as he clarifies that there is nothing to be afraid of the west bank people or the *Daffawiyya*. The narrator explains the atmosphere was as “if we’re dealing with some creature whose owner owes it to us to explain right away, before I panic, that he’s just a harmless pet and not some wild beast, heaven forbid” (10). The contractor further comments, “I’m employing a ticking bomb, brother, a terrorist”. The worker stands there lowering his gaze, humiliated and mocked, without a word of protest (13). The writer then indicts the biases of the Palestinians regarding the Israeli Arab citizens. Although many Palestinians living in the territories legally or illegally arrive in the Arab villages, to work for the Israeli Arabs, but they consider Israeli Arabs to be “traitors”. The narrator’s brother-in-law Ashraf enlightens him, saying that “Don’t feel sorry for them...Now they’re begging, but deep inside they’re convinced that every Israeli Arab is a traitor and a collaborator” (27) The situation turns eerie in the village of *Let It Be Morning*, because of the gag order imposed by the Israeli government. The Inhabitants become frustrated and assume that the wrath of the blockade is for the “terrorist” workers. “Those *Daffawiyya* West Bank residents have no shame”, (73) people comment. The West Bank people can blow up anything they want but have no right to be in the village, making the Israeli Arabs lives miserable. Rapidly, the inhabitants in the village grew violent, verbal abuse turned into physical. Consequently, the inhabitants decided that workers should be handed over to the Israeli military. At this point, Kashua stretches the account of discrimination and mistreatments of the Palestinian working class groups in Arab villages. As previously, workers were allowed to do menial work in Israel. However, the First Intifada (1987–1993) in the Palestinian territories changed everything; they were barred from Israel and only allowed if their contractors were citizens. At that point not only their living condition deteriorate but they met with exploitation by the Israeli-Arab contractors. The narrator says, “the workers clean, cook, work the assembly line, and the Israeli driver [contractors], the only person legally entitled to collect their salaries, distributes it after taking

his fat cut” (141). Further says, people became rich and whatever the prosperity the village savoured was the product of the workers’ sweat and blood. Nevertheless, the workers, in the book, ended as the victims of the inhabitants’ cruel little games, as the village decides to push the stripped workers towards the on stand Israeli military by the blockade. On the contrary, the Israeli military shot at the workers, killing many. After some time, the killing repeated. Seeing the butchery, all the man backed out, only the woman came to the worker's rescue. The air was heavy with the shelling and the killing, “The workers, weeping, gather[ed] up their clothing”, all abandoned in a vulnerable position; and “Nobody speaks to them” or a word of compassion or security (159). Kashua displays the contrast between the screen and reality. Or hyperreality, as coined by Baudrilard, where images become more real than the reality (Jim Powell 45). People identified with the Palestinians on the TV, but not with the ones they see every day in the streets looking for work. The narrator says,

People around here felt sorry for them when we saw them on TV, being shot at or trying to stage a protest....the locals identified with the Palestinians on TV, but it’s as if the ones on TV were completely different people...Those weren’t Palestinians but just workers who make trouble. No chance any of them would ever be on TV. People in our village identify with pictures from far away, forgetting that those pictures were taken a two minutes’ drive away from here (73-4).

As Debord points in *The Society of the Spectacle* , “All that once was directly lived has become mere representation...images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream and the former unity of life is lost forever” (2). The narrator then goes on to say, these Palestinian’s wars are not the true wars in the village. “The real wars in this village are the wars over honor, over power, over inheritances and over parking places”. He thinks that maybe war is good for the village, as it distracts the inhabitants from their cruel little games (74).

Arab Citizens in Israel

The author writes about the ID cards that the Israeli government imposes mandatorily on the Arabs in Israel in *Dancing Arabs*. The Arab-Israeli citizens living before 1948, and after 1967 or the inhabitants under the authority in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem; every Arab carries colour coded ID cards at all times in Israel. The ID cards signify who is segregated by what means, and who has the advantage to have any privileges. Only the Jewish Israeli citizens can relish all the privileges without any discrimination. As in the book, the narrator explains the preferences of the Jewish employers,

The Jews preferred Arabs who had a blue ID card and could get to work even when there were roadblocks, curfews, or war; not like the Arabs from the West Bank with their orange IDs. This was toward the end of the first Intifada, and the orange ones missed many days of work (137).

As the narrator got married, he and his wife decide to settle in Jerusalem, in southern Beit Safafa. However, there is segregation between the different parts of the land; the northern part of Beit Safafa was under Israeli from occupation 1948, and the people there are considered citizens of Israel. For that reason, the facilities in the northern part significantly superior than the southern part. On the other hand, the southern part was also occupied by Israelis in 1967, but the people there are considered as Israeli residents and referred as Palestinians. Life was challenging in the southern Beit Safafa, but as the narrator and his wife are citizens, have medical insurance and can speak Hebrew, the resident landlord treats them with additional respect, as The Israeli citizens are “considered superior and more loyal....always had more work on the Israeli side” (148). As the narrator and his wife are citizens, have medical insurance and can speak Hebrew, the resident landlord treats them with additional respect, but she always rejoices whenever Israeli forces meet with difficulties. The Palestinian residents’ perception of

Israel and the government is paradoxical. As people appreciated the living condition in the state but were resentful of Israeli policies and military discrimination towards them. In addition, since the beginning of First Intifada (1987 – 1993) or revolt, life grew much more difficult. Renting the apartments to the Arab-Israeli tenants is the only way of the residents' income, no resident wants to join the revolt and lose the tenants. The narrator says the Palestinians are remorseful of the misfortunes of those who are attacked by the Israeli military, but “they won't throw so much as a single stone at the Jewish soldiers who are underfoot everywhere. It's embarrassing what people will do to make ends meet” (149). The narrator regretted their decision living in the southern side, moreover even though they rented in the Arab area, under an Arab landlord; despite that they felt as if they are outsiders, foreigners in the place, “we're onlookers, like strangers, doing nothing” (151).

The tension increased in Israel and the territories as the First Intifada grow strong in the region, and the narrator begins to blame his father for “planting hope” in his mind and teaching him songs of solidarity of the people and land, and singing to be “free and united” (151). He cries that he “can never forgive him for giving us the idea that we'd defeat the enemy with tires and stones” (151). As Bhaba's *Nation and Narration* gives the idea that, minorities characterise the idea of nation in their narrative, as they are rejected by the majority to have any sort of space (1). Kashua indicates the lack of space through the narrator, as he has no hope remained but only hate; hate for his father restraining him to leave the land with his philosophies of never giving up and there cannot be any other place called home (151-2). According to Fanon, “In the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. Whenever a man of color protests, there is alienation. Whenever a man of color rebukes, there is alienation” (43). The narrator fled and had a schizophrenic moment and becoming overwhelmed with anxiety and paranoia states,

I'll tell them I'm a citizen and that I'm only renting here. I'll show them my ID.... I'm not really Palestinian. I'll tell them the baby's sick.... They're not going to recognize me. I'm counting on the fact that I look like a Jew. Let's just hope they don't see my wife. Couldn't I have picked someone with a lighter complexion? ...Lucky I'm not one of those who hang prayer beads on the mirror.... or letters in Arabic. I've got a pretty Jewish car... I've always known how to make myself inconspicuous....They're burning down mosques. They're shooting at villages and cities. People have been killed. There's a strange pain in my joints. My arms and legs feel hollow, full of cold air, paralyzed (154).

He describes at the end of the book that his resilient father stopped fighting for justice, or for solutions. Because the Arab world is occupied with their own problems, and the strength to oppose Zionism and wars is absent in them. As Nasser is dead, so is the dream of a united pan-Arab. The narrator describes his father has accepted defeat,

He doesn't care anymore about the revolution or equality or land or a free country.... He says the Palestinians should give up too, and if he were a Palestinian leader, he'd order them to destroy the El Aqsa Mosque....with dynamite ...and... clear away every vestige of Islam and Arabism... that would be the Palestinian revenge for the silence of Islam and of the Arab world in the face of their suffering. And if the Saudis and the Iranians and the Syrians and the Egyptians and twenty-two Arab states—as the Zionists put it—want the El Aqsa Mosque and Mohammed's El-Quds, let them come and protect it themselves.... everyone had better just give up like us, like the Israeli Arabs (225).

In *Let it be Morning* Sayed Kashua indicates to the other side of the coin, after many years living under the authority of Israel, the Arabs began to accept that the hyphenated, Bi-national identity of them is now a reality. According to Homi K. Bhabha, "nation, like narratives, lose their origins in the myth of time. And only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye." (*Nation and Narration* 1). The Palestinians reunion is challenging as the societies are scattered in opinion and philosophy. The best choice is to embrace the state, without compromising the values. As a result, it is evident in the narrator's father's view of the state, as "father has full faith in the state, he always has" (107). Regardless of being called "traitor" and "collaborator"; in the "eighties and nineties" embracing the Israeli Arab identity became normal. The narrator clarifies that,

The Arab citizens not only resigned themselves to being citizens of Israel, they even grew to like their citizenship and were worried that it might be taken away from them. They no longer dreamed of being part of the big Arab world stretching "from the ocean to the Gulf" the way they used to. On the contrary, the idea of becoming part of the Arab world even began to frighten them. They truly believed the Israeli politicians who claimed that "relative to the Arab states, the situation of the Israeli Arabs is amazing," a sentence that always shut people up when they started talking about discrimination. People were afraid they wouldn't get their National Insurance allowances anymore, or that a day would come when they'd find themselves in a country without medical insurance, welfare, pensions for widows or single parents or the next of kin, allowances for the elderly and the disabled, unemployment benefits or subsidies (108).

The world became immobile in Kashua's dystopian society in *Let It Be Morning*, as the Israeli Arabs learnt that they are no longer Israeli citizen as they have been "transferred" to the

Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. The narrator expresses that his father has now turned into a mourning man. The Israeli specialists appearing in the TV screen comments on the event saying, “‘At long last, the Zionist dream is coming true’ moreover ‘The Jewish identity of the state has never been clearer... the population of the State of Israel has now become almost one hundred percent Jewish. At long last, a truly Jewish state’” (265). One, in particular, stresses the idea that,

“The Israeli Arabs,”...“never felt part of the State of Israel. They’re really Palestinians, whose relatives live on the West Bank and in Gaza. The transfer of lands to the Palestinian Authority has spared Israel the enormous danger of a rising Islamic Movement and other nationalist movements from within. They should be pleased that we are enabling them to reunite. They’ve always complained about being discriminated against and about their minority status...the Palestinian population that was previously referred to as Israeli Arabs can serve as a bridge between the Arab world and Israel. They know us well, after all, they know Israeli society, our language and our democracy. They will play an important role in the democratic changes that will take place, if at all, in the Palestinian state (269).”

The Israeli Arabs think that the state has sold them down the river (268), and began to get irritated seeing the UN people waving at them as if they are happy with the entire “transfer” that just pushed them out of the country and robbed them of their Israeli citizenship. The democracy they talk about in Palestine will never prevail as the Palestinians have always considered Israeli Arabs as collaborators who sold themselves to the Jews, nobody will dare to say anything as they will “swallow them alive”(269).

Amid all the confusion in the books and the Palestinian and Israeli region, Kashua writes in *Dancing Arab* the possibility of hope when the young narrator's exclaim with joy that "I was so happy. Nadav felt the same way I did. That Jew really did love me" (67). Kashua figuratively signify that kids and uncorrupted of the norms of systematic race or discrimination; but the system forces them to learn discrimination, therefore it is the people in power that politicise race and narratives for individual benefit. And so resulting in a conflict of opinions, and prolonging the process of peace. Kashua' writing is a bridge of the peace process, where the Jews learn the inner most thoughts of Arab-Israeli. So that Israeli Jews might realise that the Israeli Arabs are similar to them, people who are searching for a nation and identity in Israel.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Sayed Kashua's narrators in the *Dancing Arab* and *Let It Be Morning*, can remind us of Shakespeare's Caliban, who curses his master Prospero with the colonising master's language. In *The Tempest* (1611) Caliban is enforced to learn Prospero's language, to serve Prospero; educated in Prospero's knowledge to appreciate Prospero's culture, moreover trained to believe that he appears inferior to Prospero. As Deleuze and Guattari say that the minor literature's essence lies in its ability to write back at the majority, and it is always political; Kashua and his nameless narrators do the same under the authority of Israeli colonial design. However as an alternative to Caliban's approach, Kashua's works- as observed in the postmodernist writings similar to Vonnegut- combines the language with dark humour rather than profanity; with the aim to point out the absurdity of the neo-colonial Israel, as well as the ridiculousness of his Arab-Israeli community. Kashua refrains from insults: Because humour is much more stimulating and it is known as the weapon and as well as the shield of the weak. However, analysing the books, one can find it difficult to understand if they are reading the stories of the narrators, or the personal stories of the author. As it gives the impression that Kashua is disguising his self-consciousness behind the nameless narrators. Moreover, the readers may find it provocative that they discover humour in one of the world's most controversial of settings and stories. While Caliban has a name to identify with, however, Kashua's protagonists are nameless to perhaps indicate the lack of proper definition of "self", or the in-betweenness of Arab-Israelis identity in the Israeli society. *Dancing Arabs* portrays the quest of assimilation in Israeli state or *dance* between the Arab and the Israeli identity, whereas *Let It Be Morning* exposes the false assumption of belonging to the home known as Israel. Kashua explores both of the stimulus to fit the protagonists in the Israeli society, by the means of language, narrative, culture and appearance, however, we find that the end result is always oxymorons; as the merger of the identities appears to be impossible. As per social and

literary critics like James Baldwin, Derek Walcott and Gloria Anzaldua who talk about the colonisers' language talking "the burden" of the colonised; hybridity of language and race; and the establishment of a "New Mestiza" or third space; the author Sayed Kashua remains cynical of the possibility of the Palestinian/Arab-Israelis recognition in the Israeli society. Because the currently self-exiled author says,

Twenty-five years of writing in Hebrew, and nothing has changed.... I had few reasons to be optimistic but continued to believe that one day this place in which both Jews and Arabs live together would be the one story where the story of the other is not denied. (*The Guardian*)

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Kashua, Sayed. *Dancing Arabs*. Translated by Miriam Shlesinger, Grove Press, 2004.

Kashua, Sayed. *Let It Be Morning*. Translated by Miriam Shlesinger, Black Cat, 2006

Secondary Sources:

Abu-Saad, Ismael. "The Role of Education in Minority Identity Formation in an Ethnic State: The Case of Palestinian Arab Youth in Southern Israel." *The Arab Studies Journal*, 11/12, no. 2/1, 2003, pp. 57–75. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27933866.

Anderson, Benedict R. O. G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1991.

Anita, Ábel. "Native American Identity Crisis in the 20th-Century United States." University of Debrecen, *Proceedings of the 1st American Studies MA Conference at the University of Debrecen*, 2010, pp. 5–15, amstudconf.comoj.hu.

Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2002.

---. *The Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*. Routledge, 1998.

Balint, Benjamin. "Confessions of a Polyglot." *Haaretz*, 12 Jan. 2018, www.haaretz.com/1.5063931.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2009.

Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, 1990.

Brenner, Rachel Feldhay. "The Search for Identity in Israeli Arab Fiction: Atallah Mansour, Emile Habiby, and Anton Shammas." *Israel Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2001, pp. 91–112. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27793855.

Calloway, Catherine, "'How to Tell a True War Story': Metafiction in 'The Things They Carried.'" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 36, June, 1995, pp. 249–256.

Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. Macmillan Publishers, 1998.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Zone Books, 1994.

Deleuze, Gilles, et al. "What Is a Minor Literature?" *Mississippi Review*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1983, pp. 13–33. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20133921.

Donna K. Bivens. "Key Concepts: What Is Internalized Racism?." *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. CAPD & MP Associates, 2005, pp. 43–52. <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/potapchuk1.pdf>

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks: Forewords by Ziauddin Sardar and Homi K. Bhabha*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. Pluto Press, 2008.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth: Frantz Fanon; with a Foreword by Homi K. Bhabha and a Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre*. Grove Press, 2004.

International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society, vol. 17, no. 3, 2004, pp. 415–437. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20007689.

JanMohamed, Abdul R., and David Lloyd. "Introduction: Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?" *Cultural Critique*, no. 7, 1987, pp. 5–17. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1354148.

- Kamin, Debra. "The Greatest Living Hebrew Writer Is Arab." *The Tower*, June 2013, www.thetower.org/article/the-greatest-living-hebrew-writer-is-an-arab/.
- Kashua, Sayed. "Why I Have to Leave Israel | Sayed Kashua." *The Guardian*, 19 July 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/20/sayed-kashua-why-i-have-to-leave-israel.
- Leiderman, Sally, et al. "Key Concepts: What Is Racism?." *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. CAPD & MP Associates, 2005, pp. 31–42. <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/potapchuk1.pdf>
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Minute on Indian Education". *Selected Writings (Classics of British Historical Literature)*. University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Makkawi, Ibrahim. "Cultural Hegemony, Resistance and Reconstruction of National Identity among Palestinian Students in Israel." *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2008, pp. 23–42. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41858560.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Monahan, Isabelle. "A Conversation with Sayed Kashua on Arab-Israeli Identity." *Moment Magazine*, 28 Sept. 2017, www.momentmag.com/conversation-sayed-kashua-arab-israeli-identity/.
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. J. Currey, 1986.
- Peleg, Ilan. "Jewish-Palestinian Relations in Israel: From Hegemony to Equality?"
- Petry, Alice Hall. "Alice Walker: The Achievement of the Short Fiction." *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1989, pp. 12–27. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3195263.
- Powell, Jim. *Postmodernism for Beginners*. Writers and Readers Pub, 1998.

Saenz-Badillos, Angel. *The History of the Hebrew Language*, translated by John Elwolde. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Said, Edward W. *The Question of Palestine*. Vintage Books, 1992.

Shimony, Batya. "Shaping Israeli-Arab Identity in Hebrew Words—The Case of Sayed Kashua." *Israel Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2013, pp. 146–169. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/israelstudies.18.1.146.

Wepler, Ryan. "‘I Can't Tell If You're Being Serious or Not’: Vonnegut's Comic Realism in ‘Slaughterhouse-Five.’" *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, pp. 97–126. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43921804.