

FRAGMENTED HOME AND PERENNIAL MEMORY: EXPLORING DIASPORIC IDENTITY THROUGH CHRONOTOPE IN HALA ALYAN'S *SALT HOUSES***Dr. Dhiraj Saha^{1*}, Dr. Shrabanti Kundu², Mr. Praveen Toppo³ and Dr. Syeda Saleha Jafri⁴**^{1*} Assistant Professor, Centre for Language Studies, P P Savani University, Surat, Gujarat² Assistant Professor, Centre for Language Studies, P P Savani University, Surat, Gujarat³ Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English, Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University
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Abstract:

Narratives of displacement engaged with memory help accentuate the spatio-temporal existence of an individual. The present study enquires the model of displacement and memory in Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses* to focus on the intricate interplay of temporal and spatial dimensions of constructing diasporic identity. Alyan employs unique narrative techniques, such as unreliable narrator, intermixing of first-person perspective and memoir-like tones, to vividly portray the fragmented memories of displaced characters. These narrative choices reflect a broader historical narrative of trauma, resettlement, and the enduring impact of displacement on individual and collective identities. Alyan's investigation is profoundly rooted in her Palestinian heritage. It brings the conflicting situations of generational shifts into limelight. The anguish and dislocation characterise the Palestinian diaspora in the novel. Alyan's nuanced examination illuminates the complex identities of Palestinians living as part of a diaspora. The existence of the diaspora caught between the memories of their homeland and the realities of their hostland is also portrayed in the novel. Further, through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, the paper investigates the intrinsic connectedness of time, space and memory. Memory, in this context, acts as an important link between the homeland and the hostland, between the past and the present. It encapsulates the experiences of displacement, adaptation and the continuous negotiation of identity. In *Salt Houses*, memory is not just a passive recollection of the past but an active, dynamic force that shapes the characters' lives and identities. The study explores how memory, within the framework of the chronotope, serves as a bridge that connects the historical and personal dimensions of the characters' experiences. This exploration provides profound insights into how individuals grapple with their place within society, the weight of history, the notion of home, and the intricacies of identity. Through the examination of the above-mentioned themes, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of diasporic identity.

Keywords: Diaspora, Memory, Chronotope, Displacement, Identity**Introduction:**

The writer upon experiencing displacement, endeavours to elucidate genealogies of historical progress and human settlement, has garnered global attention. The collective voice of displacement and relocation poignantly reflects the contemporary challenges of resettlement. The narrative also denotes a profound sense of urgency considering the global scenario of migration. The study endeavours to have a narrative enquiry (meaning to disclose the past events in a narrative justification) upon the element of memory presented in Hala Alyan's novel *Slat Houses*. Memory and its fragments in the displaced life

of the characters in the novel makes it closely follow the historical narration. The narrative in parallel to the historical procession appropriately situates the characters and incidents. Therefore, it emerges out as a convulsive argument as it narrates the incident of trauma in several innovative techniques like – unreliable narrator, first-person narration, writing in a tone that is similar to autobiographical and memoir writing. Reference to the new and old generation of Palestinian subjects who are equally suffering the historical loss Alyan's novel inquisitively refers to the double identity of the Palestinians living as the diaspora. Hala Alyan, a second-generation migrant, undertakes a meticulous examination of the contested terrains of human history, drawing from her familial roots in Palestine to illuminate generational shifts in anguish and dislocation.

In diaspora studies, the interplay between 'space' and 'time' frequently attracts the attention of the critics, yet commonly considered as separate dimensions. This separation typically arises from postcolonial frameworks that isolate spatial dislocation and temporal disruption as distinct consequences of colonization and migration. However, the inherent interdependence of time and space underscores the presence of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. According to Bakhtin, the chronotope is "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). The framework of chronotope offers a nuanced lense to witness diasporic experience. The concept also frames a bridge to memory studies, specifically in the context of Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses*, where the confluence of space, time and memory intertwiningly portrays the characters' existence with in the world of confluence. Further, memory studies focus on process of remembering the past, alteration and transmission of it across generations. In the context of diaspora, memory acts as a vital link between the homeland and the hostland; the past and the present. Memory encapsulates the experiences of displacement, adaptation and the continuous negotiation of identity. Hirsch marks the nature of memory and mentions,

These terms reveal a number of controversial assumptions: that descendants of victim survivors as well as of perpetrators and of bystanders who witnessed massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the pervious generation's remembrances of the past that they identify that connection as a form of memory, and that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event. (2012)

Therefore, the present study explores the how memory employs within the framework of the chronotope in *Salt Houses*. The study further illustrates the interplay between spatial and temporal dimensions in the constructing of diasporic identity. Centring Alyan's novel the inquiry deals with the memories of a tumultuous past, wherein individuals grappled with their place within society, the weight of history, the notion of home and the intricacies of identity.

Reconstructing Fragile Home through Memory

In *Salt Houses*, Alyan employs the titular metaphor to underscore the fragility of the concept of home, juxtaposed against the enduring traces of sorrow symbolised by tears. Alyan's novel intensifies the Palestinian cause through the intricate tapestry of narrating events. She weaves history, culture and identity with the thread of memories of the past and lost homeland. This conscious engagement with the plight of her parents' homeland demonstrated with historicity of the events, wherein the characters serve as conduits for Alyan's impassioned plea for recognition and reimbursement of human suffering. Further, Alyan's narrative can be viewed as a caricature of the intricate historical tapestry woven by wars and settlements. The structure of the novel, moving back and forth in time, emphasises the continuity to mark the diasporic experience. The memories of pre-1948 Palestine reflected through the past of the characters. Further, the trauma of the Nakba and subsequent wars and displacements are woven into the narrative to highlight the impact of past events on shaping present realities. The novel illustrates the supremacy of memory across generations in demonstrating the individual experiences and

collective family history. For instance, Alia's memories of her youth in Palestine influence the understanding of her children's growing up in different countries. In some cases, the resemblance between the characters and the author represents the taxonomy of the collective presence of migration in the novel which brings the human cost of geopolitical upheaval. Alyan's affluent chronical draws meticulous attention to detail of the effect of uprootedness. Further, memory of the characters underscores the gravity of her message, positioning her novel as a vital contribution to the ongoing dialogue surrounding dislocation and destabilization.

In the novel *Salt Houses*, the concept of home reflects the presence of chronotope through multiple connotations. Chronotope explains metaphorically the inseparable nature of time and space. The narrative serves as a rich site for exploring themes of memory, displacement and identity. The narrative presents various homes that the characters inhabit, each with its own emotional and historical significance. The analysis of the time-space connotation of home reflects the interconnectedness of memory with existential space. The first home the novel introduces is in Jaffa. On the night of her daughter's wedding, Salma crossing the time and space, reflects on her home in Jaffa, feeling nostalgic for "the city with the peach-colored house they'd left behind" (Alyan, 2017). In her memory, the past home is vivid; she can visualise the village on the hill through overseeing the ocean and its orange orchards. After being displaced from her ancestral home, Salma re-creates a new home in Nablus. Despite this attempt, the new home remains shadowed by the old one:

In Salma's mind this remains the new house, the Nablus house. She has come to love it, in a resigned way. It is larger than their Jaffa home, the rooms cavernous, high-ceilinged... But the house remained ghosted with its former life, the dinners and celebrations and quarrels it had witnessed. (Alyan, 2017)

The contrasting presence of the two homes in Jaffa and Nablus marks the dichotomic presence of Salma with her profound emotional attachment with her roots and the continuous struggle with the displaced identity. The memories of Salma reflecting her past association with Jaffa are vivid and persistent. It imbues the past with a spatial and temporal immediacy that haunts her present. The memory of her home in Jaffa is not merely a recollection of a distant place but a lived experience and a constant reality which continuously influences her current existence in Nablus. This interplay of past and present and the spatial displacement, creates a complex chronotope where different times and spaces coalesce, highlighting Salma's inner turmoil and the fragmented nature of her identity (Bakhti, 2008). The allegory of nature here acts very strongly to mark the intricate chronotope, as Salma tries to recreate her home in Nablus by establishing a garden. Her connection to the soil symbolises a deeper search for roots and a sense of belonging. She attempts to bridge the temporal gap, through planting imagery, between her past in Jaffa and her present in Nablus. The act of claiming the garden as completely hers, Salma attempts to carve out a personal space that connects her present with her cherished past, an effort to recreate the temporal and spatial unity she once felt (Alyan, 2017). Thus, according to Esther Peeren,

The chronotope prompts a view of diaspora identities as predicated on a removal not only from a particular location in space and moment in time, but also from the particular social practice of time-space through which a community conceptualizes its surroundings and its own place in them. (2016)

Moreover, considering the dialogic structure of the novel, the work explores a nuanced cacophony of trauma writing probing into the intersections of home, identity and memory from varied subjectivities. The special existence of home in the narrative marks the multiplicity of it. The various homes the family inhabits over the decades serve as repositories of memory. Each home marks an important stage in their individual existence as well as embodies specific historical and emotional experiences, from the ancestral home in Jaffa to the transient apartments in Beirut and Paris. The special existence of home imbued with personal and collective histories marks the backdrops to the narrative. The journey of every

character in the narrative reflects the microcosmic side of broader human experience. It casts light on the complexities of displacement and diaspora. Through her collaborative effort to speak truth to power, Alyan emerges as a formidable voice for the marginalised and dispossessed, underscoring the importance of confronting the distanced and destabilised past with courage and compassion.

The gradual progress of the novel witnessed in the second chapter of *Salt Houses* where the perspective of Mustafa highlights an alternative understanding of home. Mustafa inherited the re-territorialised home from his mother, Salma. After Salma moves to Amman, Mustafa's emotional attachment transfers to the family home she left behind. Moreover, the home symbolises sign of neglect:

FROM A DISTANCE the house appears unaltered, the doorway framed by trees. Only upon closer inspection do signs of neglect become apparent—the untrimmed hedges, the windows streaky with dust, a slackness to the doorknob, which turns too easily in Mustafa's hand. (Alyan, 2017)

Mustafa witnesses Salma's home as “a beautiful trinket that he cannot touch without its breaking” (Alyan, 2017). He transfers the meaning of home with the place of her mother's residence. Although he has inherited her home as an ancestral property still the essence of ‘home’ is missing as the absence of Salma creates vacuum. In absence of Salma, “the kitchen counters are scattered with newspapers, a bowl of pears—his favorite—and cellophane bags of bread and crackers. A jar of pickles sits atop one of honey; there is a grayish plant he never remembers to water on the windowsill above the sink” (Alyan, 2017). The contrast between the house under the care of Salma and the negligence of Mustafa emphasises that “home does not simply exist, but is made. Home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

Mustafa's emotions towards home are attached to the mosque where he finds his true home and priority, rather than the neglected house. His regular visits to the mosque are not solely about religious devotion but also about connecting to his origins. Further, when he finds the word “Palestine” in the sermons of Imam Bakri about Allah's greatness, the coming war and the righteousness of the land, his attention is captivated by one word: “Palestine” (Alyan, 2017). The mosque's significance lies in being a place where personal and social meanings converge, “a product of interrelations” (Massey, 2005). Mustafa finds comfort and order in the mosque as he able to find a sense of satisfaction among like-minded individuals. The idea of reclaim Palestine strengthens his bond with the space. The mosque, therefore, becomes a symbol of belonging, transcending the physical existence of a house. This communal kinship and solidarity among young displaced Palestinians foster a true sense of home for Mustafa, who perceives lost Palestine as the true home.

The change in perspective marks a significant meaning of home in the novel. The first part of *Salt Houses* is narrated from the point of view of Salma. Her narration of home was ornamented with dreams of returning to Jaffa. The next section shifts to Mustafa in Nablus in 1965, presenting his traumatic experiences of displacement. Both characters reflect nostalgically on the past and reveals the conflicts with the Israeli forces that led to the displacement of Palestinians. The memories of Mustafa voice the brutal reality of war, as he states, “They have even taken away our deaths. They have robbed us even of the dignity of death” (Alyan, 2017). The narration showcases his unique voice, deeply aware of the political and geographical aspects of home. He also comments on the unhappy circumstances of other characters, illustrating how uprootedness and new encounters reshape identities. Alia reminisces about her home in Nablus through tangible objects that evoke her memories. She attempts to reclaim a past she knows is irretrievably lost, feeling a deep sense of longing for her former home: “a fever or a cancer, the longing for what had vanished wasting a person away. Not just the unbearable losses, but the small things as well” (Alyan, 2017). Her nostalgia manifests through objects that symbolize her memories, such as “seashells she filled with bobby pins” and “the tangerine dress she'd bought right before her trip to Kuwait and never worn” (Alyan, 2017). This aligns with Daniel Miller's argument that

the generality of materiality, that is any attempt to construct general theories of the material quality of artefacts, commodities, aesthetic forms and so forth, must be complemented by another strategy that looks to the specificity of material domains and the way form itself is employed to become the fabric of cultural worlds. (Miller, 2002)

Similarly, Souad's stay in Paris during the Kuwait war evokes her longing for home. Her feelings of loss are evident as she realizes that returning to her past is impossible:

There would be no return. Her clothing ... the large evil eye dangling from her window. The map she'd hung after an argument with her mother, enormous, spanning an entire wall with blues and greens. Her old school, the chalk on her classroom floor, the market her father likes to buy melons from. She suddenly recognises it all as lost. (Alyan, 2017).

The items she remembers are not just objects but symbols of her lost home and past. Her journey makes her understand multifarious idea of home. Initially, she views home through material possessions and memories. Later, as a mother in the United States, she attaches the idea of comfort and security with home. As she seeks a place where her children can feel a sense of belonging and familiarity. This shift reflects the idea that "home" can be both a physical place and a feeling of connection to one's cultural roots; "concerning the 'return' migration of the host-country born second-generation to the country whence their parents emigrated, this return taking place in adulthood and independent of their parents... the return might be part of family return" (King & Christou, 2011).

Atef's story further explores the concept of home. Reflecting on his past in Amman, he recalls his emotional connection to the Yacoub family and realizes that his true home has always been with them: "He thinks of his beautiful wife, that afternoon in her mother's garden, the mosque light he saw when he met her. Nablus, filled with flowers" (Alyan, 2017). Alia's Alzheimer's diagnosis intensifies Atef's role as the keeper of their shared memories, emphasizing the importance of family and memory in defining home. The title *Salt Houses* symbolizes the fragility of the diasporic home, easily washed away because of hardships of life. Atef and Alia's migrations highlight this transient nature, as they continuously seek stability and belonging amidst constant change. Atef's reflections on their numerous homes underscore the temporary nature of their dwellings: "The houses float up to his mind's eye like jinn, past lovers... The sloping roof of his mother's hut, the marbled tiles in Salma's kitchen, the small house he shared with Alia in Nablus" (Alyan, 2017). The events presented here entangled with time, memory and space brings the concept of chronotope, which metaphorically expresses the inseparable nature of time and space. The literary device facilitates the narrative to explore themes of memory, displacement and identity through the depiction of various homes inhabited by the characters. Each of the home is imbued with its own emotional and historical significance. Thus, Farzad Karimzad and Lydia Catedral mark, "chronotopes to trace the dynamicity and heterogeneity of images of the homeland among diasporic communities" (2021). The chronotope in the novel reflects the interconnectedness of memory with existential space. Further it highlights the essence of past which has a continuous influence on shaping the present.

The juxtaposition of homes in Jaffa and Nablus marks the profound emotional struggle of the character of Salma with her displaced identity. She attempted to connect her present with her cherished past through the creation of a garden in Nablus which marks the presence of intricate chronotope. The dialogic structure presents varied subjectivities, exploring the nuanced intersections of home, identity and memory. Characters like Alia and Souad reflect on their past homes through tangible objects and memories. The relation between collective memory and individual experience illustrates the personal and collective histories that shape their identities. The reflections of Atif on his past home emphasis the transient nature of home which also echoes by the title "Salt Houses". The fragile diasporic home marks the diasporic home. Further, the idea of chronotope in *Salt Houses* serves as a powerful narrative device. It encapsulates the complex interplay of time and space in the lives of the characters. Alyan's novel

emerges as a pivotal contribution to the ongoing dialogue surrounding dislocation and destabilization. It offers a poignant exploration of the human cost of geopolitical disturbance and the persistent search for identity and belonging.

Diaspora and Displacement: Identity Crises in New Chronotopes

The polyphonic structure of the novel delves into the identity crises experienced by the Palestinian diaspora. The dispersion and the resettlement often cause feelings of alienation in host countries. Mass migration as an aftermath of political conflict and individual decisions to escape terror are depicted in the novel to mark the process of framing new identities and sense of belonging. The novel highlights the dynamics between minority and majority groups in the host country. The conflict emphasises the isolation faced by migrants due to their ethno-cultural belonging. The minority status due to their migration underscores their marginalised existence. The alienation leads to intensify the identity crises among the migrant. For instance, Manar's isolation is vividly portrayed: "For years, Manar nursed an image of herself, dusty, solemn, walking onto Palestinian soil, squinting in the sun. So, when she peed on that stick and a little blue cross appeared, marking her to this new, alien life, that image flashed before her" (Alyan, 2017). The existence as a diaspora involves navigating the language, culture and practices of a new country which intensely influences identity formation. According to Julianne Hammer, "such factors as class, economic and legal status, and political affiliation shape every Palestinian's identity, even as each maintains a self-perception that envisions Palestine as a unified country with distinct language and cultural values, regardless of its current reality" (2005). Apart from the individual identity, the Palestinians are keeping the national identity. Moreover, Bakhtin's emphasis on the dialogical nature of chronotope which highlights the impact of historical events like the Oslo Accords and conflicts such as the Six-Day War or the Intifadas become pivotal chronotopes. The connectivity between time and space construct Palestinian identity gradually. These historical markers not only affect individual experiences but also contribute to a broader chronotopic framework of memory, trauma, and resilience within the Palestinian diaspora narrative. Since the year 1993 many of the Palestinians are encountering the course of return through the peace process 'The Oslo Accords' between the Government of Israel and Palestinian Liberation. This process mentions that the six major historical events mark the identity crises among the Palestinians. The narrative structure, divided into fragments that span different times and places, underscores the fluidity of chronotopes in shaping identity. Those events are - Great Revolt of 1936-9, Arab attack in 1948, the uncertain economic condition from 1950s to 1960s, Six-Day War of 1967, 1987 first Intifada 1987 and second Intifada of 2000 and the Gulf War of 1991.

The catastrophic uprooting and dispersion of Palestinians causes the refugee problem. In the novel *Salt Houses* the dramatic shift in the context raises the fundamental reconfiguration of time and space that profoundly affects identity. Salma, as a character, embodies this uprooting. Her memories of Jaffa, "the city with the peach-coloured house they'd left behind" (Alyan, 2017) and her inability to accept her new dwelling place as part of her identity highlight the tension between past and present chronotopes. The novel begins with the perspective of Salma in 1963, portraying Nablus as a space where she dreams of her lost home, Jaffa. Thus, she frames her identity crisis within this chronotopic displacement. The second part is set in Nablus in 1965. It deals with the conflict of national identity. The third part marks 1967 Kuwait and it explores Alia's understanding of identity in migration. Her moving Atef to Kuwait introduces a new chronotope, reshaping their identities through the lens of migration. Part four of the narrative is set in Kuwait in 1977 and reveals the struggle of Atef with his Palestinian identity. It also navigates the haunting memories of Mustafa. The authorial voice marks the act of migration as an escape in the context of Atef, emphasising the influence of changing chronotopes upon identity. The subsequent sections continue to show shifting identities as characters move through different geopolitical spaces:

Amman, Kuwait, Beirut, Boston, and Jaffa. Each location represents a unique chronotope that interacts with the individuals in the novel.

In *Salt Houses* the abstract notion of time which confronts to the inter-related frame of time symbolises that, “no moment of time, is the full and most essential meaning of the word. If taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomenon and objects, making of them a mere abstract conglomeration” (Bakhtin, 2008). Time not only confronts to the individual’s perspective towards change but also considers the intergenerational aspect. Thus, examining Palestinian identity through Riham and Souad embodies the chronotopic narrative space to mark the fragmentation. Riham’s fragmented identity is shaped by multifarious aspects of memories and experience of migration. Part of her identity is constructed by her the husband’s perception of refugees and other half through Souad’s fractured identity due to the Gulf War and the subsequent migrations. All these illustrate how different chronotopes impact individuals’ identities. Souad’s return to Beirut signifies a release from her hyphenated existence and also illustrates Bakhtin’s idea of chronotopic transitions facilitating a reconstitution of self. All the marked incidents exemplify the “trans-positioning” of individual identity. The narrative further echoes Bakhtin’s assertion, as he mentions, “the present and even more the past are enriched at the expense of the future... the future is not homogeneous with the present and the past, and no matter how much time it occupies it is denied a basic concreteness, it is somehow empty and fragmented” (2008). Hala Alyan uses these chronotopic shifts to portray the ongoing construction and reconstruction of Palestinian identity. Alyan’s narrative reveals the constant process of identity formation amid changing geopolitical and temporal contexts. It emphasises the influence of chronotopes in individual’s identity which they carry as a part of their existence. This aligns with Bakhtin’s concept that identity is continually produced and reproduced through transformation and difference. Further, the representation of four generations of the Yacoub family in Alyan’s novel depicts how the clash of cultural existences and the experience of migration reshape their identities. Alyan marks the polyphonic existence of time and space to illustrate the dynamic interplay of selves in the diasporic space.

The chronotope of the novel marks the violation of the rights of the Palestinians. The much-oppressed existence of Palestinians along with the narration of dispersion is voiced in this novel. The dreadful events of 1948 and 1967 which disrupted the time-space belonging of the Palestinians, framed the community consciousness towards the changing identity. The sense of fractured identity presents the emotional suffering due to conflict and war. Thus, Denise Hassanzade Ajiri remarks that “‘Salt Houses’ describes how distance deprives people from being part of their loved ones’ life” (2017). Further in this context, Alyan herself mentions,

So, I was going over different notes, and thinking about the themes that were most salient in the book, which words were repeated. Obviously, there were houses, homes. And I thought about this one scene, where one of the characters talks about remembering all of the different houses that he and his family have lived in over the decades, and thinking of them as structures made of salt that the tide can come and erase. Salt houses. That was it. (Rebolini, 2017)

Salt Houses accounts a compelling and dynamic exploration of identity in accordance to home. The reciprocal orientation of home in the novel furthers the “complex dialogized hybrid” (Bakhtin 77) in terms of existence in a foreign-land. Through the Yacoub family, the novel delves into the forced and political migrations of the Palestinian diaspora. The lived experiences of three generations of the Yacoub family illustrate how their identities evolve in response to shifting geopolitical landscapes. David B. Green in the review of the novel marks that, “Hala Alyan’s ‘Salt Houses’ is a family saga, although even the word ‘saga’ may be overly grand, since none of its characters are the makers of history: They are history’s victims” (Green). The review reflects on the concerns of identity formation in the personal space dealing with the cultural interaction between the ancestral belonging and new

encounter in the host land. Intellectuals from various disciplines conceptualised identity from multiple perceptions, often describing it in terms of ethnic belonging, language, culture and shared history. While we attempt to understand the narrative through narrative chronotope and memory it emphasises the inter-connectedness of time-space in shaping identity in new land. Bakhtin's chronotopes organise "centers for the fundamental narrative event of the novel. Chronotope is the place where the knot of narratives are tied and untied" (2008). In *Salt Houses*, the chronotope reflecting on the migration of Yacoub family and their memories of Palestine illustrate the process of identity formation in accordance with spatial and temporal dimensions of existence. The diasporic space, nurtures chronotope in term of third space, confronts the dialogic structure to express the heterogeneity of existence. Further, Martin Baumann in the article "Diaspora: Genealogies or Semantics and Transcultural Comparison" mentions that- "the idea of "diaspora" has been celebrated as expressing notions of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and(re)construction, double consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth" (2000).

While understanding hybridity and double consciousness reflected in the narrative structure, the character of Souad marks the prominence. The fractured sense of self become more evident when she learns that her mother is migrating from Kuwait. Alyan portrays the fragmented existence of the migrants through the disordered situations. The incident where Alia declared to Souad about there departure in fragments, raised many questions in her – "take where?" (Alyan, 2017). The political turmoil and the individual's perception of it is here problematised. The continuous change in geo-political belonging troubles the positionality of Yacoub family. The displacement in the narrative while creates problem in perceiving the static identity the narrative chronotope makes the events tangible as "time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible" (Bakhtin, 2008). The continuous migration marks the cercle of dislocation and relocation which questions the belonging of the Palestinian. Hala Alyan in this novel identifies the individual memory in relation to collective and explores the conflict of belonging and home in manufacturing identity. Reflecting upon diasporic identity the words of Stuart Hall marks, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (2006). The first transformation the family encountered with Salma's migration from Jaffa and it continued from then. Salma's positionality as a woman also suffered significant changes due to her marriage.

Identity is not a singular entity rather confront multiple contexts of existence. Alyan's novel accentuates the concept through diverse events and the lives of the characters in diaspora. Moreover, the definition of identity provided by Robin Cohen suggests a belonging to the homeland and a connection with its language and culture. All these together form the identity of the diaspora, thus Cohen mentions, "acknowledge that 'the old country'—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions" (2010). Thus, for instance, Salma's performing the ritual of predicting the future from a cup of coffee suggests her cultural lineage: "The cups, however, are well worn. Hundreds of times, Salma has placed a saucer over the rim and flipped the cup upside down, waiting for the coffee dregs to dry. She prefers to wait ten minutes but often becomes occupied with her guests" (Alyan, 2017). Salma is attached to her cultural roots. Thus, though she has migrated to a new land a long back, still continues the traditional practices of her homeland. Her act of reclaiming the roots also symbolises that she is carrying her cultural identity. The identity of Salma as a diaspora testifies to Cohen's proclamation of diaspora and identity. The idea of identity in framed through the combination of time and space can be viewed through the concept of chronotope. According to Bakhtin, chronotope "serves as the primary point from which "scenes" in a novel unfold, while at the same time other "binding" events, located for from the chronotope, appears as mere dry information and communicated facts" (2008). Thus, in the novel chronotope materialises time and space, and defines the process of identity formation of Salma in the novel.

Moreover, Kobena Mercer, in the book *Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Post-Modern Politics*, defines the identity crises among the community of diaspora, mentioning, “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (2013). Mustafa clings to religious identity in moments of crisis. He looks at the mosque as a place to find solace:

Mustafa has a flighty belief in Allah, an avowal that he recognizes in more honest moments as tactical. If there is ever a sweeping of believers into one room and the rest into the other, he doesn’t want to be on the wrong side of the door. 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. (Alyan, 2017)

Mustafa conceptualises belonging through memories of his past home. He nurtures his religious association to overcome the alienation in the host country and thus, claims his identity through the rusty smell of the mosque. Further the proclamation of identity provides voice against marginalisation of the Palestinians. Palestinians experience a double dispossession regarding their bodies and souls, in terms of physical reality and memories of the past. The knowledge of history makes them self-conscious about their positionality.

Conclusion

Salt Houses by Hala Alyan navigates the exploration of displacement, memory and identity in diasporic space. Alyan’s narrative is shaped by her second-generation migrant perspective. Her understanding of diaspora intricately examines the historical and emotional impact of displacement on the Yacoub family. Her employing various narrative techniques such as the unreliable narrator, first-person narration and autobiographical tones effectively conveys fragmented identities of the characters in the novel. Focusing on the Bakhtin’s consideration of chronotope the interplay between space and time is analysed in this novel. The artistic connotation of time-space conveys intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships. The framework of chronotope offers a nuanced perspective on the diasporic experience. The link between memory studies and chronotope suggests the problematic existence of the Palestinian diaspora. Memory, in this context, acts as a bridge between the homeland and hostland. The interconnected nature of time, space and memory encapsulate the experiences of displacement, adaptation and the ongoing negotiation of identity. Thus, the confluence of space, time and memory in *Salt Houses* portrays the characters’ existence within a world of interwoven histories and identities. The polyphonic structure of the narrative allows for a multifaceted exploration of identity torn apart between spaces. Further, the analysis encounters interlaced personal and collective memories along with the cultural traditions marking identity in changing geopolitical landscapes. Alyan’s depiction of characters like Manar, Salma, Alia, Atef, Riham, and Souad highlights the tension between their ancestral roots and the new realities they face in foreign lands. This dynamic interplay between past and present, homeland and host country, encapsulates the essence of diasporic identity. Through the exploration of the concept of chronotope, Alyan not only grounds the characters’ experiences in specific historical contexts but also illuminates the continuous process of identity formation and reformation. The novel’s fragmented structure, spanning various times and places, reflects the fluidity and complexity of diasporic existence. It captures the emotional and psychological upheavals that accompany forced migrations and the struggle to reconcile with a fractured sense of home. Furthermore, *Salt Houses* serves as a poignant narrative that delves into the intricate fabric of diasporic identity. It highlights the resilience of the Palestinian diaspora, who, despite their dislocation, struggles to maintain their cultural heritage and sense of self.

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