



## Subversion and Exclusive Identity in Palestinian Fiction by Women

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Abstract

*Palestinian fiction by women subverts and challenges the existing gender paradigms and traditional patriarchal norms in the Arab culture. This paper explores Huzama Habayeb's novel Velvet with the theoretical backing of Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, thus maintaining that a critical focus on the nexus between distinctive performativity and exclusive identities offers an alternative stance to the oppressive patriarchy in the Arab world. With the recent refugee crisis in the Muslim world, these narratives become extremely important and relevant, offering a space where issues of gender, identity, patriarchy, and religion erupt and coincide. Unveiling the construct of the female gender as only a set of performative norms instead of being an existentialist reality offers distinctive gender configurations and a site of exclusive identity for women. The paper establishes that Palestinian fiction by women has become a site for women's actualization where they defy and resist male hegemony.*

**Key Words:** Abjection, Exclusive Identity, Distinctive Performativity, Gender, Palestinian Fiction

### Introduction

Feministic voices from the Arab world, despite being an indispensable and vigorous part of the Arab Muslim literature, have mostly been ignored and undermined. Belonging to the region of continuous occupation and war, these women are doubly subalternated by the conservative patriarchal culture but still perform the defiant task of representing their side of the story to the world. Countering the Palestinian national narrative, which is a narrative of defeat lamenting the loss and inability of men in possessing their land in the like of a female body, the women fiction writers represent a counter-discourse that combats the male-oriented literature and discursive theocracies. Arab women writers, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, have been resisting and criticizing the existing gender formations that relegate women to rigid gender roles and subsequently marginalize them to a suppressed existence. While most of the Arab male writers, including Kanafani, have celebrated and idealized male virility and control, women writers have attempted to decenter this narrative, thereby celebrating the power and virility of women. Not accepting the male or Western media's projection as a mere passive veiled creature, these writers offer new and defiant forms of negotiations within culture and society. Hence, the women writers from Palestine become a source of representing what it means to be a woman in the Arab world.

This article attempts to investigate one such very recent and powerful novel *Velvet* (2019), by-Palestinian writer Huzama Habayeb taking cues from Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection to highlight the struggle of Palestinian women who claim their exclusive identity and thus break free from the gender constraints. Habayeb is one of the most powerful contemporary female voice coming from the Arab region. Credited with penning down a "new kind of Palestinian novel", she writes of the sufferings and miseries of ordinary Palestinian men and especially women. She depicts not just their crises as refugees but also highlights their tales of hopes and losses as human souls, which otherwise mostly remain untold in history. The much-applauded *Velvet*, selected for the

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current study, is Habayeb's very first novel to be translated into English. Set in Baqa, around a refugee camp in Amman, *Velvet* is a multigenerational novel that deals with the trauma and crisis of migrant and refugee women. Habayeb writes the tales of the ordinary women who otherwise get unnoticed in the historical perspectives of the national narratives. The novel revolves around a day in Hawwa's, the female protagonist, living in the 1960s and 1970s as she moves from the camp to the city and narrates the episodes from her past and present, troubled family life, abusive childhood and marriage. Habayeb manages to depict how Palestinian women are made to suffer through the norms of gender and culture and how the stronger ones are still able to resist and subvert these norms while still remaining loyal to their family ties. Julia Kristeva, one of the major 20<sup>th</sup>-century theorists shaping and influencing ideas about identity and feminism, is pertinent to this study as she propounds female subjectivity as a process that allows resistance and thus agency, political action and identity. Holding an anti-essentialist stance, Kristeva views abjection as a site that allows the submersion and collapse of boundaries and meanings, which leads to involuntary isolation from the loathsome and the disgusting. It thus leads to repulsion and reaction, both emotional and physical, thereby detaching the female from the patriarchal hold and oppression, leading to an exclusive identity for her. With this idea, this research intends to discuss and analyze the selected narrative as a site to represent and claim an exclusive identity for Palestinian women, gained through abjection against the existing gender paradigms.

## Literature Review

Feministic studies have been under a lot of criticism for addressing the women's issue as being the same despite the differences varying from class and race to religion and ethnicity. In this context, women writings from the previously ignored regions, including Asia, Middle East and Africa, have been phenomenal in changing the lens and highlighting the complexities, suppressions and dilemmas that non-white women have to deal with on a daily basis. From Fatima Mernissi's groundbreaking works *Beyond the Veil* (1975) and *A Dream of a Trespass* (1994) which are considered as the classics of Islamic feminism, to *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* by Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, which discusses the important question of politics of production, translation and reception, quite a number of works have been aimed at bringing out the contribution of Arab women towards feministic literature, refugee literature, anti-colonial literature and nationalistic literature. *Palestinian Anti-Colonialism and Literature* (2016) by Aysha Munira Rasheed is one such work that distinguishes Palestinian literature from generic Arab literature. *Qissat: Short stories by Palestinian Women* (2007), edited by Jo Glanville, serves to be a powerful collection of short stories by prominent Palestinian women writers that highlight the dissident stance of women writers. *Palestinian Women Writers and the Intifada* (1989) by Suha Sabbagh investigates the contribution by the Palestinian women writers, including one of the most notable feminist novelists Sahar Khalifeh, in resisting the Zionist oppression. *Between Complicity and Subversion: Body Politics in Palestinian National Narrative* (2003) by Amal Amireh unearths the link between ideological construction of sexuality and gender through a feministic reading of Palestinian nationalist discourse. [Dalya Abudi's \*Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature\* \(2011\)](#) offers a unique study of a mother-daughter relationship in Arab culture as presented by the Arab women writers.

[Anastasia Valassopoulos's work \*Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context\* \(2007\)](#) is another significant work that provides a critical study of the works of Arab women writers instead of just documenting them. It thus provides a less frequent analysis of the Arab women writers from a critical point of view and contextualizes women fiction in the contemporary era. Lindsey Moore has also produced a significant amount of work focusing on the Arab world and its representation in literature and cinema. *Arab Muslim Woman: Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature and Film* (2008) is one of her most prominent works that is instrumental in highlighting the techniques used by the Muslim women writers and filmmakers in presenting their version of the postcolonial experience to the world. Analyzing the works of various Arab women writers, including Fatima Mernissi, Fadwa Tuqan, and Nawal el Saadawi, Moore emphasizes the importance of including Arab women writers from Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco into the mainstream postcolonial studies as a source for providing a much needed and distinct perspective hitherto missing from the postcolonial studies.

## Theoretical Framework

This study aims to explore the defiant discourse of the Palestinian women's fiction, contextualizing it within the theoretical paradigm of abjection as propounded by Kristeva. The aim is to analyze the selected work to examine the ways *Velvet* by Huzama Habayeb serves to project the exclusive identity of Palestinian women as a combating response to patriarchal hegemony. Despite there being significant works, as mentioned above, about the contribution of Arab and Palestinian women writers, in countering the patriarchal and political hegemony, this specific theoretical space is yet to be explored. This article aims to investigate how the dynamics of abjection help women in defying patriarchal oppression imposed through gender, culture and society and thus reclaiming their identity.

This focus on gender and female embodiment is very evident in psychoanalytic feminism, which focuses on the works of Freud and Lacan. While Freud has been criticized vehemently by feminists for his anti-female approach, Lacan has been credited with de-neologization of Freud, although his phallogentrism has also got a due share of criticism. Julia Kristeva shares ideas with Lacan's pre-mirror stage, but she differs from him in her perspective regarding the symbolic stage. While Lacan conceptualizes a repressive and privileged symbolic law, Kristeva dismisses it for a maternal function. She also discovers a problematic relation between melancholia and abjection on one hand and maternal body and its loss on the other hand. However, for her, like Lacan, the speaking subject is a split-subject occupying both conscious and unconscious, culture as well as nature. This subject, thus, can be described as a 'subject in process', in French  *sujet en process*, a subject that is not a being but a becoming, always on trial against multiple contexts it experiences as Ruth Robbins elaborates it in *Literary Feminisms* (2000).

Abjection, Kristeva's key concept, postulated in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), offers an extensive discussion on the frangible nature of identity and the subject/object divide. She describes the abject as "that which does not respect borders, positions, rules" (p. 4). For her, abjection that is linked with feminine can be termed as a personal and societal rebuttal of anything that seems dangerous, sickening and disgusting. It stems from horror and is best described as a human reaction to a "threatened breakdown in meaning caused by a loss of distinction between subject and object or between self and other" (p. 17). The corpse, skin on milk and rotten fruit are used as examples by Kristeva to illustrate this breakdown of meaning which presents us with a conundrum of a thin line between a corpse and its observer, life and death and subject and the object. It eventually makes one revisit one's identity by dissociating oneself from the death and decay and defining oneself through its opposite, that is, the living. It thus frees one from being in an uncomfortable association with something or someone that is-rotten and ugly. This abjection eventually results in disgust which leads to decisions and choices towards a new, subversive and reactionary formulation of one's identity. For Kristeva, the trope of female identity and gendered existence is always viewed through the culturally constructed and inseminated patriarchal hegemony. She seeks to oust this paternal law by means of abjection as she believes that the feminine can only exist when the phallogentric domain is ruptured. This collapse then leads to establishing a woman's exclusive identity as she resituates her existence, alienating herself from the unwanted and disgusting.

Kristeva further elaborates that there are lives defined by denial and negation, lives that are based on exclusion (p. 6). She insists that it is the establishing of "other" in the place of "me" that leads to abjection. And this "Other", countering "I" holds and possess 'me" (p. 10). Abjection, therefore, differs from repression in that instead of being unconscious, it is simultaneously conscious and unconscious. This consciousness creates resistance to rigid formulations of pre-existing norms of identity and a will to revise and subvert these norms as well as the identity. Abjection, therefore, crumbles the way the world is interpreted along with the way identity is formulated within socio-cultural and political spheres. It is in this context that the selected narrative becomes extremely relevant since the novel deals with female characters that lack an identity and are othered and abjected throughout their lives. The protagonist of *Velvet*, Hawwa, resituates herself through abjection and tries to take possession of her own self and make her own decisions instead of being subjugated by the men around her. Resisting the traditional and conservative approach of being defined only by her body and her role as a compliant woman, Hawwa's character breakdowns the boundaries where she can claim her body and yet live beyond it through her exclusive identity.

## Analysis

*Velvet* tells the tales of the lives and tragedies of women who are oppressed and lack an identity for themselves. Bound within a conservative and male-dominated Palestinian refugee camp, all the women in the narrative are doubly marginalized by poverty and the camp's depravity on the one hand and misogynist exploitation by the male family members on the other. Habayeb portrays how her protagonist rebels against injustice and strives to claim her existence and identity despite all these odds.

The narrative opens up with murky images of rain, thus setting the tone of the tale to follow:

The skies were gloomier. People with pale faces.... gloomy, dispirited, and very dark [...] At times the rain was rushed as if it wanted to empty everything in the womb of the sky and be done with its burden, or perhaps its sin. (Habayeb, 2019, p. 2)

Commenting on the plight of the Palestinian refugee camp where the people were burdened by rain, poverty, misery and winter, the text suggests a double hardship for the women and the weak. The above lines from the text suggest how the maternal body is viewed as abject, where the womb becomes the carrier of sin and the burden of existence as well. It also bears reference to what Kristeva mentions as "dreaded" fear of the "generative power of the women", a fear which suggests a doing away with the maternal body ([Kristeva, 1982, p. 77](#)).

The story revolves around Hawwa, who is in her forties when the novel begins, but the narrative keeps moving between her past and present, covering a day in her life where she goes about her routine chores taking care of all her duties towards her family. The novel abounds in female characters, the majority of whom are submissive and passive. Hawwa's mother, Rabia, is an absolute example of an abject being; a mother who is absent from the lives of her daughters and expelled being ([Kristeva, 1980](#)). She is a mother for whom none of her children, not even Hawwa, feels any love or empathy, and she too does not feel any love or feelings for her children, sharing a "state of unlove" (Habayeb, 2019, p. 171). She has neither the will nor the power to stop her husband from beating up the boys or abusing her daughters. "She did not live for herself," Habayeb points out, "but at the same time, she did not live for them" (p. 172). She vents out her anger and extreme frustration at her daughters by beating them up and shouting at them. The daughters understand where the anger which "weighed down her spirit; it swelled in her heart" (p. 75), is coming from and, therefore, silently let her do that without even loving her. Kristeva elaborates this kind of trauma in her theory of melancholia in *Black Sun* (1989), referring to the trauma of female children, which is a result of the simultaneous rejection of and identification with their mother. Hawwa's elder sisters Afaf and Sajida get abused by almost all men they encounter in their lives, including even their father, and they have no choice but to surrender to this abuse (p. 84). Hawwa and her sisters are ashamed of their existence and believe that their youngest sister Duha, a sick, disabled child who dies young without developing a body, was loved by Allah, and they were not. The daughters, along with their mother, are equally devastated, helpless and broken. This mother-daughter relationship becomes highly significant, being one of the most important parts of identity formation as postulated by psychoanalysis too. In the case of the present study, this mother-daughter relationship that Rabia and her daughters have dismantles the stereotypical role of the mother. Rabia embodies Kristevan maternal abject in lacking any subject position. Kristeva theorizes abjection as a process and experience where identity is formed only after one is 'born' through a violent struggle over a bruised maternal body (1993, p. 237).

Discussing this concept of maternal in *Against Abjection* (2009), Imogen Tyler illustrates that "the premise of Kristevan abject is that maternal cannot qualify as "intelligible being [...] the maternal cannot be, cannot speak and cannot take up a subject position" (p. 9). Luce Irigaray also believes that within the domain of identity, women exhibit a paradox in that they represent the sex that cannot be defined or thought, "a linguistic absence and opacity" ([as cited in Butler, 2002 p. 14](#)). Rabia represents this abject position and absence as she never acquires the subject position at any point in her life. Her character is used by Habayeb to present contrast and rejection of the traditional role of the mother.

Rabia never obtains a subject position in her life. She demonstrates a negation of traditional mother, which is a symbol of love and protection. Through her, Habayeb projects the character of a mother who negates the traditional and biological maternal role. She does not love or empathize with her kids, and her kids also don't feel any love for her. They don't get any "help or protection" (p. 74) from their mother that could save them

from the abuse of their father. Being humiliated and abused by her husband for years, Rabia is left so “broken, weak and impotent”, that she gets emotionally and physically numb, frozen and “swept away” (p. 74). Hawwa abjects herself from this very character of her mother and endeavors to locate her identity. She comes out as a loving, devoted and concerned mother to her kids and grandkids, a protective sister who saves her brother from their father’s beatings while shielding him with her body and later even providing for him financially. She even takes care of her sick grandmother and mother dutifully when her brothers refuse to do so.

Kristeva conceives abjection as a social experience that goes beyond being just a psychic process, including not just the action but also the condition of being cast down or being abject. It is a lived experience where individuals and groups experience physical violence, disgust and hate reactions and the dehumanizing effects often produced by culture and law. This dehumanizing of abject beings and perceiving them as animalistic is an integral part of abjection ([Tyler, 2009 p.13](#)). Almost all the women characters in the novel experience this dehumanization, Rabia and Hawwa being the two most miserable victims who suffer and get abused at the hands of men in their lives. First being mistreated by her father, Hawwa is reduced to a “lesser human being” (Habayeb, 2019, p. 43). After getting married, her husband, Nazmi, produces a “puss-filled abscess in her heart” (p. 218), but Hawwa does not give in to abuse and resituates her identity, surviving on the part of the power of imagination, thereby dissociating herself from all the miseries in her life. The narrative makes powerful use of smell, both good and bad, where odour signifies all that is abject, disgusting and loathsome, contrasted with aroma and fragrance, which stands for not just any good smell but Hawwa’s resort and reaction symbolizing happiness and “perfume of heaven” (p. 239). For Hawwa, the good smell becomes a source of rejecting and countering male oppression and claiming her exclusive identity. The text abounds in examples of abject reaction and disgust to the odour of the men, their bodies and their touch. Mousa and his smell become a “physical and spiritual curse” (p. 82) for Hawwa, and later she is repelled by her husband’s smell as well (p. 239).

One of the most striking examples of abjection is witnessed when Hawwa is “nearly choked to death” (p. 46) by her first physical experience with Nazmi. The episode leaves her with an “odour of stale, greasy dirt” making her repulsive to his sweaty body, the smell of the wall paint and an equally disgusting smell sprouting from everything in the house in which “age, decay and wear fermented” (p. 47). This image of death and decay is used by Kristeva as a profound example of abjection. Hawwa’s husband and his body make her experience this abjection pushing her to meaninglessness and non-existence. It is through this abjection and physical and emotional disgust that Hawwa dissociates herself from the male oppression and reclaims her existence. She saves her spirit and body by sending the spirit to a coma and numbing her body so as not to feel any disgusting and repulsive emotions that came with every physical experience with Nazmi. She cleanses herself thoroughly after every such episode, and especially after divorce, she is more than happy to finally purge herself and the house of any smell of Nazmi that may have retained. Even at the end, when Hawwa faces death at the hands of her brother and son, she still manages to raise her soaring spirit from her body into the higher skies (p. 262). Habayeb shows how Hawwa sustains and claims her “self” and being, alienating herself from the suppressive patriarchal reality even if it brings about her death.

While the odour makes Hawwa disgusted, she is attracted towards her lover Munir because of his being neat and fragrant. Hawwa herself always “smells fresh” (p. 235) and is drawn towards everything that smells fresh and aromatic. She is repelled by “a man leaving his spittle within her and his dirty grease upon her so that she needed an age, more than an age to wash away all trace of him” (p. 238). In order to get rid of this abject touch and smell, she resorts to love, which for her is like the “fine mist” (p. 239) rain, lilies, roses and jasmine. For her, her lover’s smell symbolizes love, a smell that is not “exaggeratedly male” (p. 243), and it is this love only that can dissociate her from “her long history of subjection” (p. 244). Receiving her fate at the hand of her son Qais at the end, she does not encounter pain rather a strange burning odour that marks her end for her (p. 262). Habayeb employs odour as an abject site which leads to the repulsion and disgust of the women, thus alienating them from it.

Like Hawwa, her daughter depicts extreme rebellion and repulsion to patriarchal abuse and oppression. She even imagines killing her father in the most inhuman ways. Habayeb gives a detailed description of Aya’s imagination, where she wishes to slaughter him with an electronic saw, cutting his face into two and leaving his thus terrified eyes popped out (p. 142). Aya shares with her mother, the disgust for the bad smell. Wanting to run away from the odour of camp life and the house replete with the smell of dirt, grease and sweat, she marries

a school teacher assuming him to be a clean and neat guy. Aya is represented as a woman who is as “hard” (p.139) as her “spirit was parched” (p. 139). She is stubborn and hot-headed, and like her grandmother, does not harbor any love for her kids or mother. Similarly, just like her mother, she does not surrender to patriarchal abuse. Instead of being scared of her father’s beating, she boldly and fearlessly stares into his eyes to challenge him.

The narrative vehemently depicts how most of the men in conservative patriarchal Arab society are oppressive and abusive, so much so that their children do not wish them to come home. Habayeb describes the feelings of Mousa’s kids who “hated their father during the rain and during the winter, just as they hated him before and after winter” (p. 6). His wife felt like vomiting after every physical experience with him, something that speaks volumes of her abject experiences (p. 172). Nearly all women in the text, except for Duratal Ain, are unhappy, miserable, violated and made to suffer physically and emotionally. Even Sitt Qamar, who is an independent woman and mentor to Hawwa, has had a painful past which she cannot escape. Habayeb uses her fiction to depict how this very site of oppression is used by women to claim their identity through abjection. The strong and subversive female characters of Hawwa, Sitt Qamar and Aya, refuse to surrender to male hegemony and opt for alternative gender paradigms where they are no longer the passive receivers of abuse and male control in the name of culture, religion and family. This struggle for identity is at the core of Kristeva’s concept of abjection, and it is this struggle that processes a female’s identity resituating her existence ([Kristeva, 1982](#)). The loathing and disgust that is produced in the one facing abjection lead to separating her from the unwanted and thus, in doing so, protects and relieves her. As Kristeva puts it, “I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself . . . I give birth to myself” ([Kristeva, 1982, p. 3](#)). Habayeb’s protagonist Hawwa goes through the same process in forming her exclusive identity. She does not react to her father’s molestation complacently like her sisters; rather, she shows full resistance and a distinct reaction to her father’s and later to her husband’s abuse. Hawwa and her sisters respond differently when Mousa violates their bodies and “flesh” (Habayeb, 2019, p. 84). The eldest Afaf resists for a week having her flesh “exposed to every sort of savagery” (p. 84) and finally surrendering. The second sister Sajida surrenders the first time, “sparing her flesh great pain” (p. 84). Hawwa, however, responds differently as her “flesh rebelled [...] burned her contracted cells, and her sisters’ tears burned her spirit. She closed her eyes, she closed her ears, she closed her senses, and she closed her flesh, concealed from everything painful and everything ugly” (p. 84). This extract gives a vivid description of Hawwa exhibiting rejection and separation through abjection. Through a refusal and denial of her father’s body and abuse, Hawwa forms her own exclusive identity and distinguishes herself from the conservative patriarchal world around her. And even when she finally becomes a victim of her father’s advances after her sisters get married, she stays alienated from the torture that her body has to go through. Habayeb describes Hawwa’s reaction to this abuse as going numb and physically dissociating herself from hell inflicted on her body. Hawwa had trained her body to “cease to exist” (p. 86) and be in a state of unconsciousness. Instead of getting recoiled or freezing up, she leaves “her being complete, not returning to it unless she wished” (p. 86), alienating herself completely from this oppressive experience that her body has to face. She learns only to reclaim it when she can own it. Habayeb tells how her protagonist has an imagination “which is still active” (p. 6), having “song in her spirit” (p. 19) and developing a “singular capacity for imagination” (p. 42). Her imagination was not an ordinary one; rather, her “fantasies are multidimensional, with complete details and features” (p. 42). Her fantasies enabled her to separate her body and her spirit and thus nurture her imagination. She thus finds an exclusive identity for herself, which confronts her troubles irrespective of her miseries and poses a subversive stance. Her capacity and power of imagination, replete with “colors, sounds, and scents” (p. 43), becomes her tool of actualization and mobility, a site which renders her combating response resituate an exclusive identity for herself. Creating a different and happy place in her imagination serves as the only way “Hawwa was able to live” (p. 43). Sitt Qamar influences her the most in this regard, teaching her how to rejoice in imagination and embrace and celebrate her strength as a woman. The narrative presents Hawwa as a strong woman who, instead of fitting into her gendered role as a suppressed and submissive woman, decides to take charge of her life, where she becomes the bread earner of the family, feeding and providing for even the men in her family, resisting her husband’s physical abuse even if it meant more beatings, refuses to have more of his kids and lastly falling in love for a man even after having her kids. All of this shows a woman who is strong and resilient and knows how to love herself along with her family. She embraces her body and the desires it entails, and in spite of “having been

taught not only to hide her body but also to oppose and subjugate it” (p. 120), Hawwa accepts and celebrates her body and flesh. She views it as her “essence” (p. 120) and loving the smell of her loved ones and loathing the odour and body of her abusers.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, the selected novel *Velvet*, called a tale of passionate Palestinian women by the writer, presents a renegotiation with gender and culture where the female protagonist Hawwa subverts the gendered norms, resists patriarchal hegemony and attempts to live her dream of love and a home. Placed in a life full of complications and hardships, miseries and poverty of camp life, abusive father and husband and a disoriented relationship with siblings, Hawwa does not surrender to any emotional or physical trauma. The current analysis highlights how Hawwa maintains and claims her exclusive identity through abjection, alienating her spirit and body from the hell around her and thus dissociating herself from all that is demeaning to her being and identity. Habayeb thus envisions an alternative gender paradigm for the Palestinian women where they are not just passive and submissive creatures polarized in the dichotomous culture. The novel serves to deconstruct and decenter the use of gender in marginalizing women to a state of no existence. This tale of a strong and resilient Palestinian woman, who is suppressed but still refuses to be broken and subjugated, articulates and resituates an exclusive identity and existence for Arab women. It is this defiance of an ordinary Palestinian woman who disrupts and dismantles misogynist hegemony and gender constraints inflicted upon Palestinian women and foregrounds the narrative strategy of the writer in using her fiction as a site of resistance. In doing so, Palestinian women writers like Huzama Habayeb successfully use their fiction as a discursive tool through which they call out and challenge the oppressive and stereotypical identity constructs to which the Arab women are usually rendered in mainstream literature. This not only creates a new image of the Palestinian women and the Palestinian women writers but also challenges the dominance and hegemony of Western canonical literature in representing the Arab women.

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