Gender and Resistance in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Woman's Voice in the
Literary Works of Sahar Khalifeh and David Grossman

Thesis

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By
Breanne White, B.A.
Graduate Program in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

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Thesis Committee:
Naomi Brenner, Advisor
Joseph Zeidan
Abstract

Amidst the many literary voices in Arabic and Hebrew clamoring for prominence in the narration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are those that actively resist dominant social narratives, highlighting the multiplicity of experiences held by different members of society and how they are affected by the conflict. In this thesis I examine the literary works of two novelists, the Palestinian Sahar Khalifeh and the Israeli David Grossman, and the specific ways in which they resist dominant societal representations of the “other,” both in political and gendered terms. Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* focuses specifically on women's role in a society under occupation, while David Grossman's *To the End of the Land* looks at the military conflict through the lens of a mother concerned about her soldier son. Focusing on the woman's role in the family and in society, both Khalifeh and Grossman reveal the damaging effects that the conflict has on the social structures at the heart of both Israeli and Palestinian societies. In doing so, both Grossman and Khalifeh create new paradigms for portraying women and conflict in literature, ones that promote women as empowered subjects and highlight the varied experiences of women in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my mother, who has always been my biggest fan.
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Vita

2006 to 2011 ...................................................Research Assistant, Departments of Hebrew and Religion, Brigham Young University

2011 ...............................................................B.A. Ancient Near Eastern Studies and English, Brigham Young University

2011 to 2012 ..................................................Research Specialist, The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel

2011 to 2012 ..................................................Graduate Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

2011 to 2012 ..................................................Graduate Studies, The Ohio State University

Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.
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Introduction: Resistance and Conflict Literature

Resistance. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this term is fraught with complex connotations, calling to mind Palestinian youth throwing stones, freedom fighters, and suicide bombers. It suggests checkpoints and military outposts, guns and soldiers, barbed wire and tear gas. Born of a decades-old struggle for land and political authority, however, the resistance in Israel/Palestine began with both Arabs and Jews resisting the British rule in Mandate Palestine. Later resistance movements included Palestinian refugees resisting persecution in the diaspora and Israeli Jews resisting warring Arab armies. It also included both Israelis and Palestinians resisting Western stereotypes of religious and cultural habits and structures.

In the literary realm, Ghassan Kanafani coined the term “resistance literature,” describing the Palestinian “arena of struggle” and the part literature played in it (Harlow 2; emphasis in original). Emerging in the wake of occupation, exile, and struggle, Palestinian resistance literature provided a voice to the Palestinian story of suffering and hardship. It sought what Edward Said called the “permission to narrate,” or “the power to communicate their own histories both to themselves...and to the world outside hypnotized by the Zionist narrative of ‘a land without a people for a people without a land’” (Metres 87). Resisting the pressure to conform to either the Israeli narrative or the broader Arab
narrative, Palestinian authors joined their voices to the often confrontational struggle for a Palestinian identity. Published in 1966, Kanafani's study of resistance literature was specifically focused on Palestinian literature written between 1948 and 1966. Documenting the existence of Palestinian literature written under Israeli occupation, Kanafani emphasizes the importance of the literary realm in both resisting the political and psychological effects of the Israeli occupation and strengthening the Palestinian national consciousness.

Expanding upon Kanafani's definition, Barbara Harlow applied the term “resistance literature” to literature stemming from national liberation movements around the world. She found that this type of literature was often “1) explicitly political, even partisan; 2) often a force for eliciting and mobilizing 'collective response' to oppression; and 3) 'a repository for popular memory and historical consciousness’” (Metres 87). Harlow's application of the term focused specifically on literature of “Third World” nations who resisted and rebelled against an imperialist presence and domination from Western countries. This literature, Harlow argues, is part of resistance and national liberation movements, which “represent a collective and concerted struggle against hegemonic domination and oppression” (29) and adds to the national consciousness of the oppressed nation.

Both Kanafani's and Harlow's use of the term imply an armed struggle—under these conditions, resistance literature impelled the readers to rise up and actively rebel against the dominating power. However, Philip Metres has suggested that resistance literature is not only a call for greater participation in the armed struggle against imperial
domination (88). Indeed, in its broadest sense, to resist is merely “to withstand, strive against, or oppose; to make a stand or make efforts in opposition” (dictionary.com). Within the realm of Palestinian literature is a broad spectrum of “resistance literature,” both that which calls for increased confrontational participation and that, like Sahar Khalifeh’s *Al-Subar* (1976) [literally The Cactus; translated as *Wild Thorns* (1985)], which enables “a revaluation of resistance as a critical term, inviting a broader conception of resistance that may include armed struggle but also a host of other, less bloody and absolute responses to occupation” (Metres 88). In *Wild Thorns*, Khalifeh, an emerging female writer in the midst of a male-dominated literary sphere, complicates the idealistic views of “resistance” and “liberation,” highlighting the complexity of the multiplicity of Palestinian responses to the occupation and the Palestinian situation.

Building on Kanafani and Harlow's definitions of “resistance literature,” I would like to expand the term to include Israeli and Palestinian literature that not only resists Israel’s military and political authority, but also that literature which resists dominant societal stereotypes and power structures, both within each respective society and also in regard to the other. Naturally, by extending the term “resistance literature” to Israeli literature as well as Palestinian literature, I am stepping away from both Kanafani’s original meaning and application of the term and Harlow's expansion of the term to include other Third World resistance movements. As Israeli literature is written within the context of a democratic society and Israeli writers have a large amount of political and social freedom, they are not resisting a hegemonic power structure in which they and their people are dominated by an outside authority, which is the case in Palestinian
resistance literature. However, despite the differences in political situations between Israeli and Palestinian authors, there are recent literary texts in both languages that resist dominant social and cultural structures and opinions.

Two authors in particular, the Palestinian author Sahar Khalifeh and the Israeli author David Grossman, have written works of fiction that actively resist dominant societal attitudes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its effect on both Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, both have written novels that fall into the realm of Israeli-Palestinian “conflict literature,” my term for literature that engages with themes of conflict and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. This is a term that I have chosen to apply broadly to Palestinian and Israeli literature that depicts relationships between Israelis and Palestinians, especially focusing on the undercurrents of conflict in those relationships, and everyday life in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although these “conflict novels” do not necessarily describe military operations or battles, in depicting the realities of life in the context of the conflict and the uncertain relationships between two peoples locked in an extended conflict, they highlight the underlying fears and prejudices as well as possibilities for reconciliation in both societies.

While “conflict literature” is a broad term that I have used to describe any literature depicting the harsh realities of life in the midst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, “resistance literature” goes beyond merely depicting life under conflict. Resisting the dominant narrative based on traditional hegemonic power structures in both Palestinian and Israeli societies, resistance literature provides new ways of thinking about society and the possibility for change and reconciliation.
Both Khalifeh and Grossman produced groundbreaking novels early in their writing careers that complicated existing literary representations of conflict and the “other.” *Wild Thorns* (1976) by Khalifeh and *Chiyukh ha-gedi* (1983) [*The Smile of the Lamb* (1990)] by Grossman, both set in 1972, open up new literary representations of the complex economic and political realities in the Israeli and Palestinian societies, as well as the depiction of the “other”: Israelis in the case of Khalifeh's novel and Palestinians in Grossman's. Philip Metres' innovative proposition for a “contrapuntal reading” of these two novels shows the way in which the two novels communicate with each other, recognizing the shared history of the two societies while at the same time giving expression to the individuality of experience in each. Furthermore, Metres applies the term “resistance literature” to both of these novels, emphasizing the way in which each resists the dominant narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their respective societies. However, even though these two novels extend “the possibilities of cross-national identification and solidarity,” Metres concludes that “the final scenes leave us with a powerful sense that nothing has changed” (101); rather, what has changed is the reader's understanding of the complexity of the conflict.

More than 20 years after the publication of *Wild Thorns* and *The Smile of the Lamb*, Khalifeh and Grossman have once again produced conflict novels that seem to be in conversation with each other. Like *Wild Thorns* and *The Smile of the Lamb*, Khalifeh's *Al-Mirath* (1997) [*The Inheritance* (2005)] and Grossman's *Isha borachat me'besurah* (2008) [literally A Woman Flees from Tidings; translated as *To The End of the Land*]
(2010)], both translated into English,\(^1\) complicate simplistic paradigms about the “other”, as well as the efficacy of established power structures in society. Unlike the male-dominated novels that each wrote in the late 70's and early 80's, however, these two recent novels focus primarily on the female voice. In doing so, they resist the dominant narratives of gendered and political power structures, creating new paradigms for the representation of the “other” in society.

**The Woman's Voice in Conflict**

In recent years, the importance of recognizing women's experiences in war and conflict has been emphasized by both policy makers and conflict scholars. In order to understand the significance of Grossman and Khalifeh's focus on the women's voice in their conflict literature, it is important to understand current feminist conflict theories and their impact on how scholars and policy makers are looking at conflict. This feminist conflict theory, although primarily produced by Western theorists researching conflict in third-world countries, is an important framework through which to view Khalifeh and Grossman's novels because it shows how the two novels both reflect and refract current conflict theory about the importance of the woman in conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction.

While men's experiences in war and conflict have been heavily documented and recognized throughout history, it is only within the past 15 or 20 years that policy makers have begun seriously looking at women's experiences in war and encouraging their

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participation in both conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Even Hillary Clinton, in her role as Secretary of State, recognized this need, stating that “the only way to...reduce the number of conflicts around the world, to build sustainable peace—is to draw on the full contributions of both women and men in every aspect of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding” (USIP Peacebuilding 3). However, this emphasis on women's participation in the peacebuilding process is a very recent phenomenon and is still in the process of development. As recently as 2006, Martha Thompson wrote an article advocating a gendered perspective in analyzing conflict. She praised the current conflict theory that shows, among other things, that 1) wars seek to redesign political and economic power, 2) violence against civilians is often a deliberate strategy of control in war, and 3) it is essential to understand societal groups for whom war is a viable or practical concern. However, she states, most of these studies are largely gender-blind and “have so far failed to bring to light the different ways in which such conflict affects the roles of men and women, or the relationships and power balance between them” (344). In 2005 Dyan Mazurana put forth a similar agenda, contending that by failing to recognize the gendered nature and effects of conflict, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations officials “fail to grasp that these emerging political complexes exist upon a foundation of inequality and exploitation” (40). By ignoring the differences in men’s and women’s experiences in war, the power structures that stimulated and sustained the conflict frequently continue when the fighting is over, although often in different forms.

This call for an understanding of the underlying gendered differences in war and peace has continued through the past few years. In Valerie Hudson et. al.'s book Sex and
World Peace (2012), the claim is made that “what happens to women affects the security, stability, prosperity, bellicosity, corruption, health, regime type, and (yes) the power of the state. The days when one could claim that the situation of women had nothing to do with matters of national or international security are, frankly, over” (Hudson 1). Using the largest database on the status of women in the world, Hudson and other scholars found that “the larger the gender gap between the treatment of men and women in a society, the more likely a country is to be involved in intra- and interstate conflict, to be the first to resort to force in such conflict, and to resort to higher levels of violence” (Hudson 1). These findings are in direct contrast to the views advocating that nationality, ethnicity, language, or religion are the main indicators and catalysts for conflict. Furthermore, these scholars go so far as to make the claim that “international security cannot be attained without gender equality, for gender inequality is characterized by norms of violence that permeate society and have a negative impact on foreign policy...the status of women, it seems, is a taproot of international security” (Hudson et. al. 102-103). According to these recent studies, the treatment of women and women's experience in war and peace are vital indicators of the stability of societies and nations.

Women, Motherhood, and Peace: A Simplistic View

A number of feminist critics have highlighted the differences between the dominant patriarchal and subordinated matriarchal/female societal systems. Many have set for an agenda calling for a female type of power structure, advocating that the “rhetoric of patriarchy” reflects the desire to change others and persuade them to agree with one's own viewpoint and is focused in a framework of competition and domination,
while feminism recognizes the “immanent value of all human beings” and is based in equality and self-determination (Foss and Griffin 4). A prominent feminist conflict scholar, Sara Ruddick, has advocated a feminist peace politics, stating that “as war is associated with men, peace is associated with women and the 'womanly’” and that “although...neither mothering nor caregiving generally are intrinsically female or feminine...yet, historically, the obligations of care thread through women's lives, creating, in specific social conditions, distinctively feminine patterns, as well as burdens, of knowledge and of love” (118). With this view of the binary feminist vs. patriarchal society have come many other theories advocating the idea that men are and have historically been purveyors of violence and war, whereas women, in their role as mothers and caregivers, are natural peacegivers and peacemakers. One prominent feminist, Sally Miller Gearhart, said the following in 1979:

It is important to the field of communication that biologically and historically we women have been thought of and think of ourselves as receptacles, as listeners, as hearers, as holders, nurturers, as matrices, as environments and creators of environments. It is important to the field of communication that, though we women now begin to discover what the suppression of our violence has meant to us, violence has been associated almost exclusively with men in our culture. (200)

Several things are significant in Gearhart's analysis: first of all, that women have both “been thought of and think of ourselves” as peaceful nurturers, and secondly, that “violence has been associated almost exclusively with men in our culture.” This view of
the men-women violence-peace dichotomy has been perpetuated in some feminist
conflict theory, presenting a simplistic view of women as victims and men as perpetrators
of violence and war.

Many of these theories draw on the very real fact that women have repeatedly
been marginalized and disregarded under historical hegemonic power structures in which
men hold the bulk of authority. This, many feminist conflict theorists contend, gives
women a unique reason to search for alternative power structures and seek for peaceful
pathways to conflict resolution. Haleh Afshar writes that feminists, “who perceive the
commonality of women’s experience as superseding man-made national boundaries”
(55), offer an alternative approach by identifying symbols of unity and shared values that
transcend the artificially-created borders and boundaries of nations and societies. These
shared values include “popular demands for human rights, democratization, economic
enfranchisement, personal autonomy and access to knowledge” (Peteet and Harlow 7)
and oppose the desire to perpetuate existing power structures that have contributed to
conflict and destruction. War, according to this feminist perspective, does not have to
consist merely of winners and losers; rather, an alternative narrative exists, “which
operate[s] laterally on the principle that you work for the decent survival of all, and that
this effort conduces to your own survival and humanity as well” (Cooke War Talk 142).

According to these feminist conflict theorists, the concept of nationhood and its
associations with war and violence is another issue that would benefit from a gendered
approach. At times of social and political tension leading up to conflict and war, certain
ideas of masculinity that are associated with violence are often highlighted and glorified.
In some conflict situations, writes Donna Pankhurst, “the more violent aspects of masculinity are played out in all aspects of men’s lives to an extreme degree” (31). This violence, however, is not always only directed at a national enemy; when violent acts are glorified in society, violent acts against women often increase. Thus a gendered approach to nationhood should show the harmful effects of pro-violence nationalism, especially the effect of increased violence on women and girls in society.

Some theorists have advocated even more extreme views of this binary, with one stating that “femininity sits uncomfortably with wars and conflicts” (Afshar 46). Furthermore, images of woman-as-mother and the woman's womb (and by extension, women themselves) as representative of a natural safe-haven and place for growth and nourishment provide a convenient metaphor supporting the women-as-caregiver model advocated. According to Tessler and Warriner, there are two overlapping visions of the motherhood model in discourses on feminism and international affairs: the first is a “cultural feminism...in which the 'female' values of caring and nurturance are given prominence.” The second is a sort of “‘moral motherhood,' which is said to incline women toward 'preservative love' and the elimination of violence in human relations” (253).

**Breaking the Binary Boundaries: What's the Use of a Gendered Approach?**

While many of these feminists conflict theorists do bring up valid issues about women in war that have not been adequately addressed, the creation of this simplistic binary leaves little room for contradictions. Many more moderate scholars, in calling for a gendered approach to foreign and conflict policy and analysis, have cited the difficulties
and complications inherent in such a black and white model. Other scholars have also expressed reservations about such female-centered ideas of peace and male-centered ideas of war and violence. In a review of some of the current literature on this subject, Tessler and Warriner state:

Critics charge that attributions of empathy, nurturance, and caring reinforce traditional stereotypes about women and retard the feminist goal of emancipation. On the one hand, some postmodern feminist theorists insist that there are no 'essential components' that characterize all women. On the other hand, some assert that the emphasis on caring is itself misplaced, either seeing this as patronizing or disputing the hypothesized link to public and international affairs. (253)

Some critics have also expressed hesitation at using the image of the female-as-mother as the ultimate symbol of women's desire for peace, arguing that portraying all women as a homogenized whole, especially when not all women are mothers and not all mothers are nurturers, does little to further the liberation of women from earlier stereotypes in which they are portrayed as belonging to a single group and unable to think as individuals.

The tendency to classify all women in a single category, whether as peacemakers or something else, subverts feminism's goals for liberating women by creating a single standard for a non-homogenous group. In a publication on grassroots peacebuilding, Donna Ramsey Marshall warned of the pitfalls inherent in a gendered analysis of conflict, including the tendency to “essentialize and universalize women, to assume that 'women' may be treated and discussed as a unitary, homogeneous category and that overarching
generalizations may be extended to apply to all women, everywhere” (7). As women do not fit in a homogeneous category, the experience and actions of one group of women will not be the same as another group of women, especially when boundaries of class, religion, race, and nationality are crossed. She goes so far as to say that “we may question the idea that peace would necessarily result if men were replaced by women as leaders” and “it may even have the opposite effect.” “War and peace,” she states, “are not male/female issues; rather, it is the underlying social and political rationalizing of violence as an acceptable tool that must be challenged and overcome” (7).

With these complications and complex issues at the forefront, then, what is the use of a gendered approach to policy analysis in conflict situations? How can viewing the differences in women and men's experiences in war be helpful to scholars and policy makers alike? Marshall cites three key points, as advocated by Austrian think tank scholar Cheryl Benard, that are helpful to remember in a gendered study of conflict. First, the conditions of war and peace affect women differently than they do men. Secondly, it is vital to remember that these differences are generally not taken into account in the construction of peace agreements, in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, and in the distribution of humanitarian aid. And third, while women are often associated with peace, this association is not always beneficial to the status of women; oftentimes, women and their status in society are actually benefitted by conflict, as they are given greater positions of leadership and authority in society when the men are absent (8-9). Therefore, she writes, a gendered analysis of war and conflict is necessary because there are certain generalizations that can be made about women's experiences in war.
Conflict in Literature: The Realist Experience

In the realm of literature, many scholars have researched and written about the importance of literary representations of conflict. The connection between reality and fiction writing seems to be so obvious to many of these critics that no justification is needed for pairing literary representations of conflict with sociological and political studies, such as is done in the book *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation* (Cooper et al 1989). In the introduction, the editors state that “while feminist philosophers, historians, sociologists, and political scientists have considered the meaning of war in their disciplines, no one has yet considered the deeply gendered mutual influence war and literary representation have had upon each other” (xv). The essays, focusing on gendered representations of conflict, “all regard literature as implicated in both the war system and the gender system and as instrumental in perpetuating the ancient essentialist war myth” (xv). According to this viewpoint, literature both influences and is influenced by war and conflict. Several other literary critics agree with the idea that fiction literature about conflict is often an expression of a society's inner feelings about conflict. Kamal Abdel-Malek writes, “What is embedded deep in the obscure poem, the little-read piece of fiction, or the cinematic screen shot of Arab-Jewish encounters may be more revealing of the true sentiments of either side than their respective political declarations to world media” (*Rhetoric* xi), while Risa Domb concludes that “every possible facet of the Arab-Jewish conflict should be illuminated and as fiction is a manifestation of reality, literary analysis of the subject might be of some help leading, hopefully, to a better understanding of the situation” (ix). All of these
statements, taken from the introductions of the authors' groundbreaking studies of literature and conflict, demonstrate the implicit reality that each critic sees in the representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in literature.

In addition to literary critics, many authors also feel that writers play the role of “the conscience of the nation.” When asked about the way in which writers fulfill this role in Israeli society, well known Israeli writer S. Yizhar stated, “First of all, there must be a need for such a thing at a time of sudden distortion of values...You do not believe politicians; you do not believe public speakers. You are waiting for somebody to speak out. Writers are people who speak out...A great number of those writers who changed things raised their voices against wrong doing” (Feldhay-Brenner 147). Khalifeh and Grossman, both political and social activists, have both written about the social impact and purpose of their novels. In 1998, one year after *The Inheritance* was published, Khalifeh stated that her novels have particular social appeal because they show a realistic picture of Palestinian society: “I do not think that anyone has written about the Palestinian society in the way I did,” she said. “No one has dissected this society as I did. I was determined to write about the different periods of Palestinian society, especially the one after the Israeli occupation. I don't think any writer has written about the Palestinian society in an accurate way, and in such frankness as I did” (“Sahar Khalifa—an Interview” 1). Furthermore, with her extensive use of the Palestinian dialect, Khalifeh's novels have a particular social appeal in their realistic portrayal of language as well as culture. As for Grossman, although he admits that in many of his earlier novels, “I have almost intentionally turned my back on the immediate, burning reality of my country”
(Writing 63), his most recent novel *To The End of the Land* stemmed from “an almost physical sense of urgency and alarm that gave [him] no rest” when his oldest son was about to enlist in the army. Because of this urgency and alarm, he writes, “I began then to write a novel that deals directly with the difficult reality I live in, a novel that describes how the cruelty of the external situation invades the delicate, intimate fabric of one family, ultimately tearing it to shreds” (64).

Both Grossman and Khalifeh write about the very real consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, projecting their novels into the realm of “realistic fiction.” They see their own novels as realistic, representing the societal realities in which they live. Literary realism, according to the theorist Catherine Belsey, is “plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar” (47). Roland Barthes advocated a similar view, stating that “realism is not a window looking out onto reality but the outcome of symbolic processes” and that “the 'realistic' effect is achieved primarily by identifying represented elements as familiar textual products, rather than as objects that actually exist in the world” (Hever 38).

However, falling into the realm of “resistance literature,” *The Inheritance* and *To The End of The Land* both reflect what is happening in their societies and project new paradigms of conflict and the female's role in society. In doing so, they contribute to the creation of a new national identity and imagination, which, according to Benedict Anderson, “involves the writing and rewriting of historical memories and shared narratives that seek to shape the reader's understanding of the nation and of national identity” (Hever 2).
Resisting the nationalist paradigms that would paint the “other,” whether the woman, the Israeli, or the Palestinian, as a stereotyped image rather than a purveyor of a complex reality, both Grossman and Khalifeh present a realistic view of underrepresented voices in their societies. Whereas in *Wild Thorns* Khalifeh set forth a humanistic picture of the Jewish-Israeli society while also highlighting the problems inherent in her own, in *The Inheritance* her focus is less on interactions with Israel and Israelis and more on the breakdown of Palestinian society and the family and the multi-faceted roles that women fill in such a society under occupation. In similar manner, while much of Grossman’s early novel *The Smile of the Lamb* dealt with interactions between Palestinians and Israelis, *To The End of the Land* focuses on the fears, realities, and saving power of the Israeli mother in conflict situations. By focusing on women, these two novels project new paradigms for thinking and writing about peace and reconciliation, from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives, in the midst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, rather than simplistic feminist manifestos focusing on the binary of men as warmakers and women as peacemakers, each novel complicates the notion of a homogeneous peaceful feminine identity in conflict. Rather, in telling the story of the breakdown of the family and, by extension, society through the woman's eyes, each novel promotes the need to look at conflict from the perspective of both men and women. Although neither provides a feminist-centered solution to the decades-old conflict, both suggest that the potential for the creation of a peaceful and stable society lies in a greater recognition of women's, and especially mothers', role in the family and in society.
Chapter 1: Women and Mothers in Palestinian Literature and Society

Sahar Khalifeh, long heralded as a ground-breaking Palestinian woman writer, presents a complicated view of both womanhood and nationhood in her novels. A self-proclaimed feminist who came into her writing career only after a failed marriage and encountering gendered oppression, Khalifeh explicitly attacks Palestinian patriarchal views of women in society, working to empower women and change attitudes about their place in the family and in the community. In Khalifeh's novels, set against the background of the nationalist struggle in Palestine, the characters are imbued with a multitude of opinions about the Palestinian reality under occupation. In Khalifeh's breakthrough novel *Wild Thorns* (1976), in which she established herself as a serious novelist, Khalifeh complicates the image of the freedom fighter as well as economic and political choices in a country in conflict, concluding that there are no simplistic answers to the extended conflict. In subsequent novels, such as *Abbad Al-Shams* (1980) [The Sunflower] and *Bab As-Saha* (1991) [The Door of the Courtyard] Khalifeh introduces female characters who become more and more active in the resistance movement, coming to recognize their place in society and in the nationalist movement as empowered women and fighting against society's traditional expectations for women.

In *The Inheritance* (1997), however, Khalifeh introduces a complicated picture of both nationalism and the female voice in society. Facing the reality of the extended
conflict, Khalifeh's female characters present a multi-faceted view of Palestinian society. The fragmented nature of their identities, including a Palestinian-American, a Palestinian who spent many years in Kuwait, and a born-and-raised Palestinian who wishes to leave the country and establish a new life in America, creates a picture of a fragmented society exhausted by the conflict and searching for new solutions to decades-old problems.

However, each female character is burdened by her own personal and familial issues, and each is fighting against the patriarchal system in some way. Far from being a feminist or nationalist manifesto, *The Inheritance* complicates the simplistic answers to issues of identity and nationhood. Resisting both simplistic national fervor and a singular definition of womanhood, Khalifeh creates a new model of the representation of women in a society filled with conflict.

Among the many different forms of resistance in her novels is Khalifeh's use of the Arabic language itself. Actively resisting the traditional idea that literary works must be written in pure literary Arabic (*Fusha*), taught in schools but rarely used on the streets, Khalifeh frequently employs colloquial Arabic in her narrative. She does this, she states, because she is portraying the realities of life, and “writing in frank and blatant languages gives the novel a living atmosphere.” Directly challenging historical and religious ideas about the Arabic language, Khalifeh states that “the Arabic language is not sacred” and “it is up to us to play around with it” (“Sahar Khalifeh—an Interview”). This act of using both Palestinian colloquial and Modern Standard Arabic in her novels separates Khalifeh's work from the traditional male and religious-dominated language structures that have historically dominated the literary works across the Arab world.
In addition to Khalifeh's use of the Arabic language, the key aspects of _The Inheritance_ also resist traditional paradigms of gender and nationalism in Palestinian literature. Beginning with the story of Zayna, born in New York to a Palestinian father and an American mother, the novel explores issues of exile, return, identity, inheritance, and the women's role in the family and in society. Upon her return to her “homeland,” a country to which she had never been, Zayna's intent to claim her dying father's inheritance is complicated by her gender: even though she is the only child returning to claim the inheritance, she only has claim to part of it because she is a girl and not a boy. Because there was no male heir, her father's brother was slated to receive the largest portion of his property after his death. However, Zayna's father's newest wife Futna, hoping to claim the large portion of land and money belonging to a male heir, resorts to artificial insemination and is found to be pregnant just a few days after her husband's death. Written shortly after the Oslo Accords, the complicated argument over who inherits the family property in _The Inheritance_ raises larger political questions about the legitimacy of ancestral claims to land in the disputed territory of Israel/Palestine. However, in addition to her political criticism, Khalifeh's focus on women in this argument over the family inheritance criticizes traditional views of women in society and highlights the increased public role that women have played and will play in this society torn by conflict.

As the story of the family struggle over the inheritance plays out, Khalifeh weaves together the stories of several women and their different responses to a traditional patriarchal society in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition to Zayna, a
returning outsider, and Futna, a Jerusalem-born Palestinian, we are introduced to Nahleh, a single woman recently returned from years in Kuwait, and Violet, stifled by her West Bank lifestyle and dreaming of immigrating to America. Each character is imbued with different aspects of what can be called “feminist” desires to assert themselves and make their own choices in a hierarchical patriarchal society torn by conflict. However, neither the feminism nor the nationalism displayed in the novel follow traditional Western paradigms of self-assertion and expression. In order to understand the significance of the critique of Palestinian society as presented in *The Inheritance*, therefore, it is necessary to understand the contexts of feminism, nationalism, and conflict in Palestinian society and literature.

**Feminism in Conflict: Resistance and the Woman**

The incompatibility of nationalist and feminist struggles in conflict situations has long been an issue studied by feminist theorists and conflict scholars alike. In nationalist struggles, are female rights relegated to a second-tier position? Are nationalist-feminist groups possible? Is true and stable nationalism possible when women's rights are ignored or exploited? These questions and others have been asked by many scholars studying conflict, especially armed conflict, and the rise of nationalism within new and emerging countries. Majaj et al explored this issue in their study of the intersection between gender and nation in Arab women's novels, stating that “nationalist causes often situate women between two extremes, viewing them either as emblems of cultural authenticity locked within traditional roles or as participants in masculinist political struggles—struggles that typically impel women to lay aside female roles in response to nationalist exigencies”
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an ongoing conflict that has widespread repercussions for both genders on both sides, has produced a similar dilemma of the conflict of women's rights and national stability in Palestinian society. However, as short-term frenzied nationalistic fervor has gradually given way to long-term resistance and a plethora of semi-permanent symbols of nationhood and identity, expectations of women and their place both in society and in the struggle for a Palestinian identity have also changed and expanded.

Female roles and attitudes in Palestinian society have been greatly influenced by the current and historical Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian women have been active in asserting the Palestinian cause and have joined with men in opposing the Israeli occupation. However, Palestinian women and men are not viewed as equals in terms of their roles in either the conflict or in Palestinian society. Traditional Arab gender roles have dominated the discourse surrounding women's role in society and in the conflict, recognizing the contribution of women to the nationalist cause in a way that empowered and valorized the nation and the group above the individual. In the early communiques of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) and the PLO, for example, women are viewed in the traditional paradigm of the weaker sex, being listed “with occupational groups such as merchants, peasants, students, and workers,” and other communiques group them with the elderly, children, and other vulnerable sectors of the population (Massad 475). Later communiques recognized the role of women in fighting the occupation, but only in their role as mothers: they discussed “the thousands of women who miscarried as a result of poison gas and tear gas grenades, and those women whose
sons and husbands were thrown in the Nazi prisons” (475). Women and mothers were called upon to resist the occupation in specific ways, including demonstrating on International Women's Day, and were “praised for subordinating gender issues to national ones, and [were] asked implicitly to transfer the legitimacy of their cause against sexual oppression to the national struggle” (476). While their role as women and mothers was recognized, the national struggle was held as the ideal, and individual and gendered rights were subverted for the cause of the nation.

The supremacy of the nationalist cause in Palestinian society is one of the reasons that, as Julie Peteet states, “the use of the term feminist in the Palestinian context can be problematic, as there is not a self-defined Palestinian feminist movement per se” (97). Because of the overarching concern regarding the Israeli military presence and the Palestinians' subordinated rights, all other concerns were naturally viewed as less important than, and even distractions from, the nationalist struggle. As the nationalist movement gained momentum among Palestinians, however, women were gradually allowed greater responsibilities in the national struggle as both genders became intimately involved with the struggle for defining both Palestinian identity and the parameters of nationhood. Furthermore, because men were killed in armed uprisings, men were imprisoned, and men were exiled, more and more women had to fill the place vacated by men. Women and mothers were left alone as their fathers and husbands were imprisoned, and the family unit was no longer a stable purveyor of traditional gender roles, as many women were left single or widowed, both with and without children. One Palestinian woman described the situation this way: “The Palestinian woman knows that
she can’t count on the presence of a man. He may die as a martyr, be imprisoned, be exiled, live underground or just disappear in a struggle...the woman has to play the male role as well as the female role” (Bamia 183). Because of the need for increased participation from women, they were allowed greater autonomy and authority in the struggle for nationhood. This participation took many different forms: women participated in both peaceful and violent protest marches, encouraged their children, husbands, and brothers to fight, and formed special nationalist women's movements, such as the Palestinian Women's Movement.

The changing and expanding roles of women in Palestinian society allowed for a feminist consciousness to develop alongside the nationalist sentiment. However, the association of the term “feminism” with Western colonialism and the attempt to subvert traditional gender roles and customs in the broader Arab society, as well as Palestinian society specifically, led to many proponents of increased rights for females in Palestinian society to use terms such as tahrir al-mara'a, women's liberation, instead of the term feminism, which is charged with Western ideas of the female in society (Ball 49). However, states Anna Ball, “this is not to say...that gender inequality is felt or fought against any less keenly than it is under the auspices of a clearly labelled 'feminism.' Rather, it indicates that resistance to patriarchal authority and the struggle for gender reform are positioned in relation to nationalism in a variety of nuanced, variously articulated and often strategic ways” (49). Thus whether couched under the term “Palestinian feminists” or “promoters of women's liberation,” Palestinian women seeking to redefine gender roles in a traditional Arab society found an outlet as well as a catalyst
in the nationalist struggle. In furthering the cause of the nation, these women were also hoping to reassign the boundaries of female roles in Palestinian society. Discovering what it means to be a “feminist” in Palestinian society, as well as how to promote the idea of women's liberation in addition to a national consciousness, is something that Khalifeh, as well as other Palestinian women writers such as Liana Badr and Fadwa Tuqan, grapple with in their literature. Writing against the patriarchal structures in which they were raised, many of these writers resist stereotypical depictions of the woman's home-bound domain, insisting that women's voice and experience be recognized and validated.

**Arab Feminism and Females in Literature: The Woman in the Context of the Occupation**

Within the domain of Arab literature, the image of the woman has long been relegated to the symbol—women were used as a symbolic representation of the nation and the land, and images of the land and longings for the nation were given female characteristics. The masculinity of conflict and struggle was offset by the femininity of the thing for which the men were struggling for—the land and, by extension, the nation. Amy Zalman explained this in her study of gender and the narrative of return, stating that “the masculine qualities of loss and return are underlined in a well-noted trope within Palestinian literary expressions of nationalism in which women are associated with an enduring and feminine land, and fused in expressions of yearning for a feminine beloved” (49). Frances Hasso also commented on this trend, writing that “consistent with most nationalist narratives, Palestinian male nationalist narratives have frequently valorized women as biological reproducers of the nation, analogized the land of Palestine to
women's bodies, and represented the appropriation and occupation of Palestine as the sexual violation and appropriation of women's bodies” (442). An example of the “expression of yearning for a feminine beloved” and her association with the land of Palestine is found in Mahmoud Darwish's poem “A Lover From Palestine”: “Her eyes are Palestinian / Her name is Palestinian / Her dreams and sorrows, Palestinian” (Darwish 23). This double association of his lover with Palestine and Palestine as a feminized lover is just one example of a plethora of literature that promotes the idealized image of the land as a suffering lover, waiting for men to redeem her and restore her honor.

Women's role as a symbol of national honor is disadvantageous to women's position in a patriarchal society because it perpetuates power structures that place women as the dominated “other,” at the mercy of the dominant men in society. As Nira Yuval-Davis stated, these associations of women with national identity can symbolize collective unity and honor in national projects; however, when used in this way, women “are often excluded from the collective 'we' of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position...In this sense, the construction of womanhood has a property of 'otherness'. Strict cultural codes of what it is to be a 'proper woman' are often developed to keep women in this inferior power position” (Ball 21). Under this paradigm, states Ball, “the nation therefore emerges as a narrative in which women feature as symbols, but lack access to any representational control: a classically patriarchal manifestation of power/knowledge” (21). When women are portrayed as symbols of nationalist dreams and hopes, they lose any authority or autonomy as nationalist subjects and instead become objects of desire, viewed not as acting agents but rather as passive dependents.
Palestinian women writers have struggled within this paradigm of women and femininity as a symbol for the masculinized nationalist hopes and aspirations. In trying to join the national struggle, women writers faced the double paradox of furthering both the feminist or female cause, presenting the woman as subject and not just a symbol, as well as the cause of the nation, adding their female voice to the male voices that had preceded them. Mona Fayad described it this way:

One of the most difficult tasks confronting Arab women writers in inscribing themselves as subjects lies in resisting and renegotiating their role within a master national narrative that not only homogenizes the concept of national identity itself, but also assigns Woman a fixed role as an historical metaphor buried deep within the foundations of the narrative. Through this historical metaphor, Woman is appropriated as signifier of traditionalism, reservoir of a communal identity out of which the "imagined communities" of the nation, in Benedict Anderson's terms, can be constructed. (147)

Renegotiating the role of women within the Palestinian master national narrative is integral to redefining women's rights and position in Palestinian society because the view of the woman as the nationalist symbol perpetuates stereotypes about male power and authority and women as dominated subjects. As Amy Zalman writes, “The image of women as passive land or as a willing mother attempts to construct femininity in a particular way with respect to a political order” and doesn't reflect the role that women have actually played in the Palestinian nationalist movement (49). However, how do
Palestinian women writers renegotiate gender roles in their literary contributions? If Palestinian female authors write about feminist struggles in a patriarchal society, they could easily be viewed as traitorously rejecting the national struggle, placing their own needs as women above the needs of the nation, or even supporting the enemy by exposing weaknesses in their own society. However, if the female author continues to portray women either as symbols or as traditional players in patriarchal societies, they are merely perpetuating the stereotypical views and treatment of women as weak, vulnerable, and unable to participate in societal power structures.

In light of this difficulty, some Arab women writers chose to emphasize topics completely removed from the female/national identity struggle. Joseph Zeidan, writing on the history of Arab and Palestinian women's literature, stated:

Over time, the search for personal identity became absorbed in the search for national identity, even to the extent of sacrificing the former for the sake of the latter... [female novelists] push aside the immediate problems of women struggling for individual freedom in a conservative society, and emphasize instead the heroines' childhoods in their homeland before they had been uprooted from it.” (170)

Other writers imbued their female protagonists with masculine traits, thus overcoming the stereotype of women as a symbol of land but perpetuating the stereotype of the dominance of masculinity and power in conflict. Layla, the protagonist in Hamida Na'ana's *Al-Watan Fil 'Aynayn* (1986) [literally The Nation in the Eyes; translated as *The Homeland* (1997)] is one such figure. A political activist, Layla actively contributes to the
nationalist cause by renouncing her femininity and performing activities, such as hijacking, typically assigned to men. However, when she displays feminine traits by falling in love, she is disgraced twice: first by being excluded from the activist organization (and thus taking away her masculine powers) and secondly by finding out that she cannot have children (thus taking away her feminine powers). The complex definition of the female's role in society is thus complicated by a protagonist who is not able to fulfill either a traditional masculine or feminine role in a conflict-ridden society.

Other Arab women writers produced narratives challenging the dominant war narrative of glorified violence and nationalism. These feminine war narratives, writes Hanadi Al-Samman, “challenge the prevalence, the silence, hegemony, inevitability, and the intactness of the patriarchy-manufactured War Myth,” one that exists in part due to the domination of women in society. Destabilizing the myth of the war story, she writes, “necessitates a constant reshuffling of the centers of power to allow fluidity and space for the emergence of a dynamic, new nationhood.” These women, writing about conflict and exposing the nihilism of the dominant narratives of violence and war, offer “peaceful alternatives for conflict resolution and national reconstruction” (338). This is accomplished, Al-Samman states, by combining the ideas of nationhood with personal issues and showing how war destroys, rather than builds, the nation.

Within Palestinian society, a plethora of literary female perspectives arose out of the conflict. Naturally these Palestinian women authors explored both nationalism and the women's place in society. However, what is extraordinary, writes Anna Ball, “is the variety of forms in which nationalism and feminism appear, and the distinctive
relationship that each author constructs between them.” For each of these authors, Ball states, “resistance' takes a different form” (52). Liana Badr's *Buslah Min Ajl Abbad Al-Shams* (1979) [*A Compass for the Sunflower* (1990)], for example, seems to place the nationalist cause before the feminist cause: the female protagonist Jinan even states that she can't give women's rights “priority in a society which is rife with social and political problems and whose very identity and existence are in question” (Zeidan 189). Fadwa Tuqan, on the other hand, published powerful nationalist poems during the 1960s and 70s, but subsequently wrote an autobiography, *Rihla Jabaliyya, Rihla Sa'ba* (1978-79) [*A Mountainous Journey* (1990; 1993)], in which she discussed the struggle of living in a patriarchal home where “the female lived out her dark, pinched-up existence” (Ball 53) and in which she asked, “How and with what right or logic does Father ask me to compose political poetry, when I am shut up inside these walls? I don't sit with the men, I don't listen to their heated discussions, nor do I participate in the turmoil of life on the outside” (Ball 58). These multi-faceted perspectives created a complex view of womanhood and feminism, both reinforcing and complicating the idea that nationalist and feminist struggles are incompatible and questioning the very definition of feminism.

**Sahar Khalifeh: Nationalism from a Feminist Perspective**

It is within Palestinian literature's struggles with nationalism and the woman's voice that Sahar Khalifeh has established herself as a feminist and as a woman writer, actively working to advance the cause and position of women in society. Not content with merely advancing the nationalist cause at the expense of women's rights, Khalifeh exposes both the political and the social problems within Palestinian society in her
novels. As a self-proclaimed feminist, Khalifeh actively renounces women's traditional oppression in Palestinian society in her novels, portraying female protagonists who are politically and socially active and who become aware of their unique position as oppressed women in an oppressed society.

Khalifeh attributes her perspective on women in Palestinian society to her personal experience growing up in the West Bank: as the fifth daughter of nine children (only one of them being a boy), she saw at a young age that women were often treated as second-class citizens. When her only brother was paralyzed, her father (at that point quite advanced in age) started looking for a second wife, hoping to have another son who could carry on the family name, as though she and her sisters and her mother were not good enough in his patriarchal opinion of men's and women's power in society. This attitude of women's inferiority not only affected the male population, however, but was infused into Palestinian women's view of themselves as well. When Khalifeh's father passed away, Khalifeh wrote that her mother lost all hope and purpose in life. In an interview, Khalifeh stated that her mother “lost her intelligence, her beauty, and her power, and became a nobody. I discovered, for the first time, that my mother—like me, like all women, like my sisters and all the sisters—was a mere victim. In her tragedy and mine, I saw the tragedy of all women regardless of traditions, laws, or cultures. That is how I became a feminist” (“My Life”).

Many of Khalifeh's novels address the issue of victimhood and the tragedy of women's lives when they are viewed as less important than men, relegated to being mere symbols or puppets in the male-dominated hands of power. One of her early novels, Lam
Na’ud Jawari Lakum [We Are No Longer Your Slaves] (1974), portrays the clash between defiant feminists and the cultural values in the patriarchal West Bank society in the 1960s, and later novels continue to question the role that women play in society and challenge the patriarchal notion that females have less worth than males. This is accomplished through subtle (as well as not-so-subtle) critiques of Palestinian power structures and those in positions of power, both in the family and in community and government roles. Contrary to the viewpoint that displaying societal weaknesses would somehow undermine their political position as a nation, Khalifeh felt that that the cultural and traditional problems in Palestinian society were the very cause of their defeat. In an interview, she stated:

I discovered that our political defeat was a result of our cultural defeat. I could see very clearly that the debacle of 1967 was the fruit of a rotten tree that needed a cure - the internally defeated do not triumph. The cure must start with our households and with those in power, with our social values and ties, with the fabric of the family, with the rules and basics of the upbringing of the individual at home, in school, and at university, and then progress to the street. Mothers can be both the dough-baker and the steel-maker of nations. Mothers are the nation because they are the source and the cornerstone. (“My Life”)

By exposing the “rotten tree” in Palestinian society, Khalifeh pursued both her dreams of nationhood as well as her dreams of equality for women. Focusing specifically on mothers, Khalifeh highlights the importance of the woman's role in the family and the
significance of the family structure in creating and maintaining a stable society.

Furthermore, in contrast to the feminists who argue that females cannot support both nationalism and feminism, Khalifeh shows that true nationalism and nationhood can only be realized when females recognize their rights and are recognized as equal members of society. As Aida Bamia stated, “The evolution of Khalifeh’s female characters moved from the inner to the outer struggle; without finding themselves, they would not have been able to serve their national cause, without fulfilling themselves they could not have fulfilled their national duty” (184). This evolution happens especially as Khalifeh's female protagonists come into contact with people and ideologies that try and subvert their power and voice in society, especially by promoting the masculinized nationalist cause at the expense of women's rights.

The praise for Khalifeh's revolutionary portrayal of women in her novels has been abundant from feminist critics and other literary scholars for the way in which she advocates for recognition of the multiplicity of women's personalities and roles in society. Within Khalifeh's œuvre, her female characters progress in their self-realization of their roles in society. In her novel *Bab as-Saha* [Gate of the Courtyard] (1991), for example, she explicitly refutes the idea of woman-as-symbol: “Wake up, clever boy,” she wrote. “I'm not the mother of the land or the symbol. I am a person, I eat, drink, dream, make mistakes, get lost, get agitated, suffer, and talk to the wind. I'm not a symbol, I'm a woman” (Fayad 148). However, Khalifeh's sole focus is not the treatment of women in society and reinscribing their identity as subjects instead of just objects. In addition to a critique about Palestinian society's view of women, Khalifeh also attacks the “rotten tree”
in Palestinian society—the problems within the home and family and with those in power—by highlighting the greed and selfishness in her society.

Khalifeh's seminal novel *Wild Thorns* exposes many of these problems within her own society, showing how factions and disagreements within the home, family, and community can lead to problems on a national level. This novel has often been compared with Grossman's early novel *The Smile of the Lamb*, with both seen as radical deviations from popular literature of the time because of their representation of “the other”—Israelis in Khalifeh's novel and Palestinians in Grossman's. It is appropriate to compare this early novel with *The Inheritance* because *Wild Thorns* focuses almost exclusively on the experience of Palestinian men, highlighting destructive attitudes in the family and community, while *The Inheritance* focuses on women's experience while still highlighting many of the same destructive societal trends. Khalifeh shows these destructive attitudes in several ways in *Wild Thorns*, but I will highlight only two: first of all, the way in which she shows the attitude of the nation being more important than the individual, and secondly, the way that her characters recognize the humanity of the Israeli Jews while at the same time seeing a dearth of these positive characteristics in their own conflict-ridden society. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest that Khalifeh sees the Jewish-Israeli society as superior to her own; rather, by exposing areas of weakness in the Palestinian society, Khalifeh points to areas of change and progress that are absolutely vital if Palestinians wish to realize their dreams of a stable nationhood.

When Usama, the protagonist of the story, returns from working in Kuwait and sees what has happened to his beloved Palestine, he is disheartened by the changes in the
attitudes of the people. His long stay working in the oil countries has kept his idealized
notions of resistance and nationhood at a passionate level, and he is sickened by the way
in which the poverty-stricken Palestinians have chosen to place economic concerns above
those of the nation. Presented with the opportunity to fight against the occupation and the
traitorous Palestinians who work “inside,” in Israel instead of in the West Bank, by
blowing up the busses filled with Palestinian workers headed to work in Israel, he eagerly
joins the resistance movement.

However, the presence of his cousin Adil among the “traitorous” workers troubles
him. He justifies his actions, thinking to himself, “So what if Adil died? Or ten like him?
The individual was of no importance when the fate of the community was at stake” (86).
Even after this thought is countered by Usama's memories of his childhood “and the part
Adil had played in his own upbringing and education” (86), including taking care of
Usama's mother when he was working abroad, he reminds himself that “his own duty was
to accomplish his mission, no matter what the sacrifices” and that “Adil...was totally
deluded, his shameful position couldn't be justified on any grounds. Nine mouths to feed?
People weren't going to die of starvation” (87). By showing the callousness of Usama in
thinking about his cousin and his family, rationalizing that the cause of the nation was
more important than the individual, Khalifeh highlights the problem of thinking that the
national cause is completely unconnected from anything else in society. By bringing up
the struggle between tender familial feelings and the untempered passion for the nation in
an extended interior monologue, Khalifeh facilitates recognition of the problem and
introspection in the reader as s/he considers the multi-faceted problems in Palestinian society that cannot be fixed by mere nationalistic fervor.

In addition to attacking the naïve nationalistic fervor that pays little attention to the individual, Khalifeh also highlights the disparity between some Palestinians' treatment of other Palestinians, in contrast to how the Jewish-Israelis treat the Palestinians. After Zuhdi is thrown in prison for attacking his friend and fellow factory worker, the Jewish-Israeli Shlomo, he is shocked by the other prisoners' treatment of him. When he walks in, “all eyes turned curiously towards him. But no one greeted him. They simply stared at him suspiciously” and even after he sat “in the middle of the room for over an hour,” “no one spoke to him” (127). Faced with this treatment, Zuhdi thinks to himself, “Doesn't anybody care about me? Even the Jews didn't act like this. Their blows, their interrogations, were easier to take than this terrible indifference. At least with them you still had some sense of worth, of being a man, of having important information Israel was trying to get at” (127-8). By contrasting the indifference the Palestinians feel toward one of their own with the treatment the Palestinians experience at the hands of the Israeli Jews, Khalifeh does not mean to insinuate that the Jewish Israelis are without fault—after all, she highlights the beatings and interrogations experienced by the Palestinians at the hands of the Jews. However, by using the Jewish Israelis as a foil, Khalifeh reveals the peril of factions within the Palestinian society itself. If Palestinians cannot find unity within their own society, Khalifeh seems to be suggesting through Zuhdi's experience, they will never be able to achieve their desires for a unified nationhood.

Nationalism and Feminism in *The Inheritance*
After the groundbreaking publication of *Wild Thorns*, Khalifeh's later novels continued their critique of destructive flaws in Palestinian society, but brought gender roles and the woman's voice to the forefront. This is especially apparent in *The Inheritance*, which highlights the issues of woman's place in society and the crisis of Palestinian nationalism, presenting them as a connected entity. Through numerous dialogues and internal monologues coming from both male and female characters, Khalifeh explores issues of gendered inequality, sexual harassment, power structures in the wake of the occupation, and woman's role in the family. However, whereas in *Wild Thorns* Khalifeh focused mainly on the male voice and perspective, in *The Inheritance* Khalifeh highlights the women's experience and viewpoint. By using both Zayna's perspective as narrator and the other characters' personal reflections and viewpoints, Khalifeh complicates the image of the stereotypical Palestinian female, whether viewed as resistance fighter, mother, or powerless sex object, and explores the reasons for the continued inefficiency and failures in Palestinian infrastructure and society.

Nahleh, a central character in *The Inheritance*, gives a strong criticism of the treatment and view of women in Palestinian society. After having worked in Kuwait for many years to support her family, she is disappointed when she returns home to the West Bank and no one seems to recognize or appreciate her contribution. After functioning on her own for several years, she is now treated like a child with limited powers of cognitive reasoning. She rebels against this family oppression, telling Zayna, “Is this what I get in life, is this what I spent my youth for—living in exile! Is this why I gave him hard-earned money and sweated in Kuwait!...He and they, all of them, all squeezed me like a lemon
and then left me behind...I sacrificed my life and raised them with my work and now I can't find anyone to talk to me” (51-52). Nahleh's extended diatribe highlights her own frustration with the place to which she has been relegated, despite her contributions to the family, because of her gender and her marriage status. Because she is a single female, she is not entitled to make her own decisions or have any say in the family. Using an extended monologue that shows the contrast between Nahleh's contributions to the family and her brothers' subsequent treatment of her as a childish figure unable to make her own decisions, Khalifeh highlights the inequality of women's status in the society and especially in the family.

This inequality is further exposed by Nahleh's brother Kamal's attitude toward her place in the family. Having lived in Germany for several decades, Kamal has been influenced by Western culture and finds many things about Palestinian society strange and offensive. Although he longed to return to his homeland while living in Germany, he is disappointed by what he finds when he comes back for a visit. The difference between Kamal's Western attitude and traditional Palestinian attitudes toward females is emphasized when Kamal and Said, his brother, are negotiating with the men who have taken Nahleh prisoner. When Said tries to strike up a deal for Nahleh's release, Kamal states that “no one is to represent Nahleh, she is an adult, not a child” (165). In recognition of her ability to speak for herself as an adult, Kamal encourages Nahleh's full participation in brokering the deal for her release. Said, however, with his traditional Palestinian upbringing, “ignored [Nahleh] completely and turned to Kamal, assuming that she couldn't understand men's talk and serious topics” (167). The contrast between the
two brothers' attitudes toward their sister emphasizes the disparity between men's and women's participation in Palestinian society. Although Nahleh is completely able to represent herself in this situation, having done so for several years in Kuwait, because of the traditional gender roles in Palestinian society, her opinion is ignored by those with traditional patriarchal ideas about gender. However, even though she criticizes the traditional views of gender roles, she still subscribes to many of them: when Kamal suggests that she move to Germany, she refuses because she fears what others would think of a single Palestinian woman living abroad by herself.

In addition to a criticism of traditional views about women, Khalifeh also exposes the inefficiencies and weaknesses in business and infrastructure in Palestinian society as she explores the spectacular failure of Kamal's factory project. An engineer educated in Germany, Kamal is convinced that he can solve some of the country's water and sewage problems by building a factory for recycling sewage and producing water safe for watering crops and livestock. After a large production crossing numerous hurdles, Kamal steps out of the project at the last minute because of the greed and selfishness of the other shareholders. Although they are certain that they have enough power and influence to make it work on their own without Kamal, the project turns into a rancid nightmare:

“The project failed, and the stench filled the air and people's nostrils, reaching the inhabitants of the neighboring villages and the wheat fields. The area was covered with rats, frogs, blue flies, and snakes. A sense of desolation and disgust spread among the people, who fell silent,
discouraged after their numerous complaints and sit-ins in the halls of the municipality and in front of the police stations.” (212)

The difference between the factory when Kamal was in charge and the way it was after he left is highlighted with gruesome detail, with Zayna reflecting that the project was now “something one never could have dreamed of even in their worst nightmares, [the ponds] were filled with a liquid similar to molasses, but as hard as cement and as black as mud” (212). This is in direct opposition to the flowers, shrubs, and trees that Kamal had planted, trying to bring beauty as well as efficiency to the Palestinian landscape.

Khalifeh's overt criticism of the failed infrastructure in Palestinian society is further highlighted as Kamal’s brother Mazen and his father discuss the project. Just in case the reader did not make the connection between Kamal's failed project and the failure in Palestinian power structures as a result of greed and selfishness, Khalifeh has Mazen, yet another brother of Nahleh, engage in an interior dialogue in which he explicitly connects the two. Although he argues vehemently with his father that the project will succeed, Mazen thinks to himself about “the discussions he had engaged in, in the past about the organization and its composition and wondered whether there could be an organization without order, and order without administration, and administration without qualifications and capability” (214). Mazen provides a further critique of the aftermath of the first Intifada, stating that “the revolution started and people followed, the educated and the crooks, the successful and the failures. It led people to this stage...It created an unqualified and lazy generation that slept till noon and stayed up till the morning, meeting on planes and in airports. That generation was living in a dream that
had lost its luster and its myth” (214). This unrealistic dream that had lost its luster is reflected in Mazen's stubborn reply to his father that the project would work out, even after his recognition of the failures that had crept into Palestinian society due to skill being replaced by greed. It is not surprising, given the overt criticism of this project, that its stench overshadows even the opening of the cultural center, which, for all of the good intentions and hard work of Zayna and Mazen, also turned into a failure of mass proportions due to lack of foresight about security and crowd control. Through these examples Khalifeh outlines the reasons for many of the failures in Palestinian infrastructure, including placing money and connections above skill and the mentality of mass society, unable to think for themselves but instead acting as a greedy crowd.

Futna's pregnancy by means of artificial insemination is perhaps one of the most shocking incidents in the story, as Futna resists both traditional views of motherhood and nationhood. With her husband (who is quite advanced in age) in the hospital so soon after their marriage, Futna has no way of producing a son and claiming her husband's sizable inheritance. Although her husband's daughter from another relationship, Zayna, arrives from America just before he dies, neither the wife nor the daughter can lay claim to the entire inheritance. Only a male heir could do that. Faced with this dilemma, Futna does what she views as the practical thing: she goes to Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, undergoes a simple procedure of artificial insemination, and, a few days after her husband's death, announces that she is pregnant. Naturally the means by which the baby was conceived is questioned, but Futna zealously claims that she became pregnant just a
few days before her husband went into the hospital. Only Zayna and Futna's mother, Amira, are told about the trip to Hadassah.

The difference between Futna's and her mother's responses to her pregnancy bring two very stereotypical viewpoints into sharp relief; however, although they both reinforce stereotypes, the added reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict complicates the issue of her pregnancy. When Futna describes the procedure to her mother, she focuses on the process itself, afraid that her mother will view the pregnancy as a sexual violation of her daughter's marriage. With an emphasis on chastity and fidelity expected of women in Palestinian society and the violent consequences that can follow infidelity, Futna explains to her mother that no immoral acts were performed: “I did nothing that would anger God,” she says. “It was a simple surgery done at the hospital; the doctor wore gloves and a mask and was assisted by a female nurse” (68). When her mother doesn't respond, Futna grows frantic, certain that she is judging her for sexual impropriety. “You want me to feel guilty,” Futna cries, “even though I didn't do anything wrong. What do you want me to swear by to convince you that I did nothing that would anger God? What can I say to convince you that I didn't commit a sin?” (68). Futna's declared innocence relies on the fact that her sexual purity, according to the laws of God and advanced medical procedures, was still intact, and therefore nothing was wrong with the pregnancy.

Later in the novel, when her mother exposes her own views on the pregnancy, she doesn't dwell on the charges of infidelity that her daughter was afraid of. Although in her internal monologue, Amira curses her daughter for such a despicable act, it is the fact that it is artificial insemination from a Jewish hospital that causes the mother such
consternation and regret. “She is her daughter after all,” Amira thinks to herself, “but the artificial baby she is carrying has Jewish blood...This baby is the child of circumstances—were it not for Hadassa [hospital], Futna wouldn't be carrying a Jewish baby, were it not for the events, the conditions, the defeat, and the Jews, were it not, were it not...” (150). She even questions what her daughter will name the child: “Hadassa? Kahana? Shlomo?...Whatever is done, even if he is called Muhammad or Mahmud, he will be her grandson and Hadassa's child” (150). Amira's monologue highlights the complications in women's status caused by the Israeli occupation: no longer is pregnancy just an issue of woman's fidelity and her place in society, but now this war of nations and identities has now been brought into her daughter's womb. The conflict is no longer an abstract annoyance or even just a cause to resist; rather, it has affected the family structure and even the very definition of motherhood.

Futna's pregnancy brings into question Khalifeh's comment that “mothers are the nation because they are the source and the cornerstone” quoted above. With Amira's concern that Futna's baby is half Jewish, exactly what nation is Futna the source and cornerstone of? Does being a “mother” simply mean that one has given birth to children? Or are there more characteristics that are necessary in making a woman a “mother”? Although Khalifeh seems to believe firmly in the power of women and the mother in society, almost all of the mothers depicted in The Inheritance do not fulfill typical “mother” roles. Zayna's mother leaves her father when Zayna is a small child and, when they finally meet, Zayna feels no love or emotion for her mother. Zayna herself gives birth to a son but, when she goes to visit him after she has given him up for adoption, also
feels nothing for him, even though her grandmother “tried to explain that it wasn't normal to be indifferent and that a mother is expected to feel something” (18). Nahleh's mother has died and Nahleh herself, never having married, also does not have any children to care for, but rather “mothers” her brothers by working in Kuwait and financially supporting their educations. Even when Nahleh does finally marry, the children of her husband's first wife, her surrogate children in a way, kidnap her and demand the property that her new husband has transferred to her name. Furthermore, Futna's main desire to become a mother stems from her desire to inherit her husband's money and property. Only Amira and Umm Grace, herself a rather marginal character, fulfill the “traditional” roles as mothers. Despite these dysfunctional models of motherhood, however, I don't believe that Khalifeh is suggesting that the dysfunctional or absent mother is the paradigm that should be promoted. Rather, by showing the many different ways in which the woman’s role in society, and specifically the mother's role in the family, have been fragmented and complicated in a society torn apart by conflict, she points to one of the causes of the nation's continued defeat: the collapse of the family.

It is in the final scene at the checkpoint that we see Amira, acting in her role as a woman and as a mother, produce a new paradigm of power. After giving birth in the midst of the confusion at the opening of the community center, Futna suffers without medical attention for several hours. The ambulance is delayed at the checkpoint (but whether it was the Israeli or the Palestinian checkpoint is purposefully left unclear), the road to the hospital is jammed with traffic (Palestinians who have come to the opening of the cultural center), and the easiest way out is through an Israeli settlement. While Mazen
and the governor debate these issues, wondering if a bleeding woman who has just given
birth and, along with the baby, is badly in need of medical attention is enough of an
excuse to risk their reputations and Palestinian national identity by driving through an
Israeli settlement (but isn't it our land anyway, wonders Mazen), the situation with Futna
and her baby gradually grows worse. In this debate over how to get to the hospital, the
national concern seems greater than the individual—although Mazen thinks it perfectly
acceptable to drive through the Israeli settlement, the governor worries what it would do
to his reputation and that of Palestinian society to do so. Choosing instead to wait in the
ambulance at the checkpoint, the reputation of the Palestinian people is supposedly
spared, even though it endangers a new mother's life.

After Mazen, Amira, Futna and the baby, and the governor board the ambulance
and wait for several hours at the checkpoint, Amira decides to take things into her own
hands. She begins pestering Mazen and the governor to go and talk to the Israelis, feeling
that her daughter and grandson's life are of enough importance to somehow overcome the
imposed power structure of occupier and occupied at the checkpoint. In her exchange
with the two men in the ambulance, both of whom occupy positions of power and
authority in Palestinian society, gendered and political power structures are called into
question. When both Mazen and the governor hopelessly state that there is nothing they
can do to facilitate passage through the checkpoint, Amira says, “I don't understand, both
of you are important people in the country and you're unable to talk to them? Talk to them
in English.” When the governor states that he has tried but nothing has worked, Amira
says angrily, “I want results, not efforts. Try again, a second time. My daughter has
delivered a baby and is bleeding heavily, she might die while you are sitting here telling stories and talking nonsense.” When Mazen tries to calm her by stating that the Israelis are upset, she replies, “Aren't we all upset? My daughter is about to die and they don't want me to be upset?” (249).

In her role as a mother, Amira upsets the hegemonic male-dominated power structure in Palestinian society. In a typical patriarchal society, it is the men who hold the positions of power. However, in this context of occupation and conflict, even the traditional power figures (the governor and the educated scientist) are powerless. Seeing this, Amira, acting as a concerned mother, takes the power and authority upon herself: “I can talk eloquently and say words that would make anyone proud,” she says. “I can make them listen to me and respect me” (250). Since the men have failed, Amira takes over, flipping the gender roles because of the apparent uselessness or hopelessness of the men in power. This calls to mind the statement quoted above that women need to play the role of both the man and the woman in Palestine: having just delivered her daughter's baby (a traditionally female responsibility), she now confronts soldiers at the checkpoint and enters the militarized male role because the males have proven themselves to be incompetent and afraid. Furthermore, Amira's position as a mother makes her feel more powerful than the full might of the Israeli military. When Mazen refuses to let her go and talk to the Israelis to try and persuade them to let her daughter through, she asks him, “Are you trying to intimidate me with a bunch of soldiers gathered from all over the world? I can't sit still while my daughter is dying before my eyes” (250). Although Amira
is unable to save her daughter, her confrontation with the soldiers suggests that if anything is more powerful than military might and failed power structures, it is a mother.

However, Amira is the only mother who is empowered in the novel because of her motherhood, and with Futna's death comes further complications to the view of the empowered mother. Indeed, it was childbirth, the very act of the physical creation of a mother, that caused her death. Futna's untimely demise points to the crisis of motherhood that exists in Khalifeh's novel. This crisis of motherhood, at least as presented in the novel, is a result of both the Israeli occupation and Palestinian cultural mores that stymie progress and stability. The soldiers' delay at the checkpoint was not the only obstacle that hindered Futna's progress to the hospital. After all, Khalifeh is deliberately unclear about whether the ambulance was stuck at the Israeli or the Palestinian checkpoint even before it picked Futna and the others up, and the crowds of Palestinians curious about the cultural center were the ones clogging the roadways. Many of the other mothers in the novel are similarly affected by a combination of the effects of the Israeli occupation and a clash of cultural and progressive views of women and mothers in Palestinian society. Working within this reality, Khalifeh's portrayal of the crisis of motherhood in Palestinian society adds a critical element to her emphasis on the woman's voice and experience in society. Presenting this crisis as a result of the Palestinian reality, The Inheritance suggests that such a crisis will only be overcome when greater attention and care is given to women, especially mothers, and the critical role they play in society.

**Conclusion: Complicated Problems Call for Complicated Solutions**

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Khalifeh's novel does not provide answers to the questions raised about gender roles or provide a solution to the failed power structures in Palestinian society. Rather, she gives a complex criticism of simplistic answers to the problems in Palestinian society. *The Inheritance* critiques existing male power structures, but the novel's women don't fare much better; after all, despite Amira's specialized attention and desire to help her daughter, she still dies at the checkpoint. Other female characters in the novel contribute to the complex view of women; they are neither solely victims nor heroes. Clearly, for Khalifeh, the answers to the problems in Palestinian society are not easy or simplistic, and definitely cannot be promulgated in one novel.

Rather, the importance of Khalifeh's work lies not in its answers but in the questions it raises about existing power and gender structures in Palestinian society. What damage can be done when woman is viewed as a symbol? What danger is there to society if woman is kept out of the public sphere indefinitely? Are women only victims, or are they also perpetrators? Is sexual harassment justifiable or not? What is the role of the mother in a conflict-ridden society, and what happens when the woman-as-mother paradigm is distorted? These questions are only a few that are raised in Khalifeh's novel, and through using a multi-character approach to the text, she explodes 1:1 mapping of gender and nationalism on stereotypical males and females. Writing in the midst of conflict, Khalifeh encourages her readers to question traditional ideas and cultures that have clearly not benefitted them in the past and look for new paradigms for success and stability in a more gender-inclusive way. The answers, she seems to be saying, are as yet
undiscovered, but they clearly don't lie in the past; rather, a future Palestinian society can only function well if all members of society are included and considered.

In describing *The Inheritance*, Khalifeh states that it “gives a broader picture of Arab Palestinian society following the 1967 war, where the individual and the family were defeated, resulting in a defeated society” (“Sahar Khalifa—an Interview”). Even 30 years after *Wild Thorns*, it is tempting to think that once again Khalifeh leaves her readers with nothing more than defeatist criticisms of the pitfalls apparent in Palestinian society. However, when looked at through the lens of resistance literature, *The Inheritance* resists societal views of power and gender roles, presenting instead a realistic view of an underrepresented voice in society: the woman's. Furthermore, resisting nationalist narratives that would assign full blame to the occupation and the Israeli military presence, Khalifeh instead returns the blame for a failed nation on a society that places the national cause above concern for the individual and the family. Through this resistance novel, Khalifeh invites introspection of the role that women could and should play in society and the perils of placing the national cause in a position of supremacy in society.
Chapter 2: Becoming the “Other”: Women and Palestinians in Israeli Society

David Grossman, like Sahar Khalifeh, has long been heralded as an influential writer, attacking issues at the heart of Israeli society. His first novel, *Hiyukh ha-gedi* (1983) [*The Smile of the Lamb* (1990)], exposed many uncomfortable truths about the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the way in which such continuous conflict tore apart a family and a society. A political activist in addition to a novelist, Grossman has never been silent about his feelings about Israel's role in the many conflicts in which the country has been engaged. After his breakthrough novel *The Smile of the Lamb*, the first Israeli novel set in the occupied West Bank, however, Grossman withdrew somewhat from writing novels directly related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, writing instead about things which he stated were “no less important, things for which it's hard to find the time, the emotion, and the total attention, while the near-eternal war thunders on outside” (*Writing* 63). Writing about these things, including “a husband's obsessive jealousy of his wife,” “homeless children on the streets of Jerusalem,” and “the subtle and tangled relationships between women and their mothers, and between children and parents in general” (*Writing* 63) formed a sort of protest for Grossman: refusing to allow the conflict to dominate all of his attention and emotion, Grossman explored other problems deep in the heart of Israeli society.
However, with his recent novel *To the End of the Land*, Grossman directly confronts the conflict and its effects on Israeli society. Following an Israeli mother fleeing from the possible news that her son has been killed in war, Grossman’s novel exposes problems unique to Israeli society as well as those common to humanity. Family conflict and divorce, fear of suicide bombers, uneasy relationships with Palestinians, and military entanglements with family life are featured prominently in the novel. With this depiction of a society locked in an extended conflict, Grossman exposes the problems deep in the heart of Israeli society, both external dangers and internal crises. Grossman's use of the Hebrew language itself exposes the reader to the awful reality of the breakdown of the family and Israeli society in the wake of numerous conflicts and wars. Furthermore, the “evocativeness,” as one reviewer put it, “with which the Hebrew is used to describe landscapes, feelings, and bodily sensations” (Alter) infuses a large degree of relatability into the descriptions of situations that are only common in the Israeli reality while at the same time depicting the complicated nature of the conflict.

Although the term “resistance literature” has historically been applied mainly to Palestinian literature and other literary works from countries colonized or dominated by Western countries, I submit that Grossman's *To The End of the Land* also falls into the realm of resistance literature. Depicting a woman's attempt to save her son by running away, Grossman resists the master national narrative of an expected sacrifice of one's children to the military for the greater good of the nation. Additionally, he resists the dominant categorization of women and Palestinians apparent in earlier Israeli conflict literature. Exposing the undercurrents of conflict and selfishness that damage or destroy
relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between long-time friends, *To The End of the Land* complicates the idea that external pressures and national concerns are the only dangers which threaten Israeli society. Furthermore, by focusing on the role of the protagonist Ora in the family and in society, Grossman provides a new paradigm for the empowered woman in conflict: the mother. Instead of relying on the formulaic attraction between the Israeli woman and the Palestinian man, Grossman provides a complex representation of the woman as an empowered mother and the Palestinian as a complex individual, keeping his Arab and Palestinian identity while at the same time maintaining a friendly, almost familial relationship with an Israeli family.

**Gender and Conflict: Who is the “Other”?**

In presenting complex characterizations of women and Palestinians in his latest novel, Grossman resists the trend in Israeli literature of “othering” anyone outside the “Israeli male” standard. The social construct of the “other” has pervaded Hebrew and Israeli literature since before the establishment of the state, but its manifestation in literature has varied depending on the political and social climate of the time, first in early Palestine and later in the established state of Israel. Risa Domb's landmark study, *The Arab in Hebrew Prose: 1911-1948*, published in 1982, explores pre-state writers' depictions of Palestinians and Arabs in Hebrew literature. Among other things, Domb concludes that the early writers “do not depict the Arab as an individual, either in his physical appearance or in his mental make-up. Regardless of the different literary genres employed, the result is stereotyped” (108), and that “because [the Arab society] is a society alien to the writers, in one sense they can view it more easily. Whichever genre
our writers use, and whether they portray Arabs as individuals or as a community, they always stand from a distance, they are always detached, as if they are regarding people of a different, and rather inferior, world” (139). Domb concludes that the image of the Arab “other” in pre-1948 literature was generally either a romanticized, admired one, depicting the Bedouin's nomadic connectedness to the land, or one of contempt for the Arabs' backwardness.

Other studies soon followed Domb's foundational work. Later in the 1980's, both Gideon Morahg and Menakhem Perry expanded the criticism of the depiction of Arabs in Israeli literature to include fiction through the early 80's. Morahg notes that the differences in representation of the Arab were tied closely to the societal and political conditions in Palestine and Israel—many of the pre-state works “share a romantic fascination with the mystique of Arab primitivism” (148), while Arab characters in the Palmach period “are routinely regarded as reflectors of the unsettling guilt and moral confusion experienced by this first generation of modern Jewish warriors and conquerors” (149). Following the trend of Arab characters connected to the political and social scene in Israel, the later fiction of the 60's and 70's presents the Arab as a “symbol of the existential dread that engulfs the Israeli protagonist and prevents him from living his life as he would have wished to live it” (149). In most of these works, Morahg argues, the Arab is portrayed not as an individual but as a “depersonalized figure” who serves as a catalyst for the internal dilemmas of the Jewish characters (149). Perry promulgates a similar idea: in the pre-state texts, the binary of either the romanticized Arab or the backward Arab was a common character representation, while the fiction of the 60's
showed the Arab as the embodiment of either an absent of good or an overwhelming presence of intense passions. In short, “he is lustful and dangerous, hard to control yet dangerous to ignore; he is linked to disorder, dream and hallucination; he is surprising and unpredictable” (606). In almost all representations of Arabs in Israeli fiction through the 80's, both Moragh and Perry agree, there is a feeling of alienation and otherness, a disconnect from the humanity of the Arab character.

Gila Ramras-Rauch's *The Arab in Israeli Literature* (1989) continues the criticism of the representation of the Arab in Israeli literature; however, she optimistically points to a trend in more recent years to move the Arab “beyond the earlier [pre-state] stereotype to become either an archetype or a character” (xiv). Citing A. B. Yehoshua's *The Lover* (1977), Sami Michael's *Refuge* (1977), and Yitzhak Ben-Ner's *Protocol* (1982), Ramras-Rauch states that in these novels, the Arab “sheds his stereotypical guise to become a fully rounded character” (xvii). However, she is not unaware that many of these Arab characters, while much more personalized than in the earlier texts, “are not central but rather marginal in their society: in *The Lover*, the Arab is a mere teenager; in *Refuge* and *Protocol*, the Arab protagonists are Communists, and thus are outside both the Israeli and the Arab mainstream” (xviii). Even while pointing to the more sophisticated representations of Arabs in Israeli literature, Ramras-Ruach highlights the impersonal nature of the characters: in Amos Oz's fiction, for example, the image of the Arab is used as a “weapon of criticism” or a “focus of eroticism” but “is not given a voice of his own, as a character. Here,” she states, “Oz can be seen as arch-manipulator, activating the Arab protagonist to suit his own (Oz's) critical intentions vis-a-vis Israeli society” (162).
Although she is speaking particularly about Oz's work, similar statements could be made about other Israeli authors during this time period: they portray the character of the Arab less as a character and more as a symbol—one that does not accurately portray the Palestinian or Israeli-Arab society but rather stands in for Israeli hopes or fears. In almost all cases, the Arab characters' lack of individuality produce an “othering,” creating a barrier between the Israeli and Arab characters.

This idea of “otherness” can be harmful when propagated in a society because it arbitrarily assigns boundaries based on race, ethnicity, and geographic location. The “other” is not just different from me, s/he is different than us. In order to have an “other,” a society or group must have a standard of normal, a constructed “us” which creates the possibility of an “other.” However, the construction of the “other,” of “us” and “them,” creates a system of binary opposites that then permeates other aspects of society. In the case of Israeli society, this trend of “othering” the Arab in Israeli literature reflected the negative perception of Palestinians and Arabs in a society and culture that was bombarded with negative political, social, and cultural ideas about the Arab “other.” Whether viewed as the romanticized Bedouin, the terrifying nightmare, or the marginalized Arab looking and acting like Jewish-Israelis, these canonical representations of Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli literature perpetuate stereotypes and draw the borders more firmly between Jewish-Israelis and Arabs.

Gender has also become a binary standard of “us” and “them” in Israeli literature, in addition to the ethnic “other.” Although feminists in many societies and cultures have long been calling for equal rights for women with positive results, this has in many cases
created a “category” for women: there are canonical writers, and there are women's writers; there are policy makers, and there are female policy makers. Within Israeli society, several things have contributed to the “othering” of the woman in literature. First of all, a dearth of Hebrew women novelists in the pre-state years produced an almost exclusively male canon. In making a space for women novelists in the Hebrew literary canon, feminist critics have created a “category” of Hebrew women writers, thus creating a type of self-othering for the woman's voice in literature. Lily Rattok, for example, has essentially created a canon of Hebrew women's literature, citing women's historical exclusion from the literary canon as an impetus for a gendered distinction in authorship. Esther Fuchs, commenting on this trend of “othering” the female in Israeli literature, explains that “the female condition has failed to gain the thematic respectability of the male condition, which has been traditionally universalized by male critics as the 'human' condition,” and that “because what we might call the 'national' or 'human' points of reference in Hebrew literature have for so long been associated or identified with masculinity, female-centered fiction cannot help being trivialized” (Mythogynies 120). The normal or “human” condition represented by the dominant male voice in Israeli literature is placed as the standard by which to judge the “other,” or anything that falls outside of the dominant category. From the perspective of Israeli male writers, this creates two different “others” used as foils for the Israeli male “standard” : on the one hand is the female, a gendered “other,” and on the other hand is the Palestinian, an ethnic and political “other.” Since both categories function as an “other,” unrealistic or idealistic qualities can be given to these characters in fiction, strengthening the perception of the
difference between the “normal” and the “other,” both in the fictional works and in the consumer society.

**Israeli Male Writers: Chauvinists or Idealists?**

Among post-1967 canonical Israeli novels there are several that deal specifically with gender and conflict, focusing on relationships between women and men as well as between Israelis and Palestinians. These works of fiction by renowned authors such as Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Ronit Matalon, and Michal Govrin focus on female protagonists and highlight relationships with Palestinians between 1970-2000. Engaging topics from the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973, as well as the First Intifada and intimations of the Second, these novels form the backbone of the canon of Israeli “conflict literature,” addressing the effects of the extended Arab-Israeli conflict on the lives and society of Jews and Jewish-Israelis in particular. Although each of them are revolutionary in their own right for their inclusion of both female and Arab characters, each novel's depiction and representation of both women and Arabs adds to the paradigm of the disempowered or misrepresented “other.” Without included and accepted female and Arab characters, these novels reflect many opinions and perceptions of the majority view in Israeli society but fail to present a new paradigm that breaks away from the “othering” of both females and Arabs.

One of the first of these gendered conflict novels is *Michael sheli* (1968) [*My Michael* (1972)] by Amos Oz, published just after the 1967 war. In this novel, Hannah Gonen becomes the lens through which we see the “other”: in her case, the two Palestinian boys that haunt her dreams and contribute to (or result from) her increasing
insanity. Here, the construction of the Arab “other” is very obviously based in fantasy and neurosis. The two boys, remnants from Hannah's pre-1948 childhood memory, appear during her neurotic dreams and become increasingly violent and unrealistic. Because they are not portrayed as realistic characters, but rather as players in Hannah's neurotic nightmares, it is obvious that they are mere representations of deep psychological fears held by many in the Jewish Israeli community—they are violent and domineering, plotting to destroy. Hannah's characterization as a mere representation of psychological fears, however, is less obvious, but perhaps more harmful because it is presented as realistic. As a character, she is neurotic and sexually domineering, and although it is through Hannah's point of view that we as readers view the other characters, her neurotic episodes make her less and less trustworthy as a narrator, and even the other characters begin to question her emotional and mental stability. During one of her episodes of neuroticism, her husband tells her, “You've gone out of your mind, Hannah” (195), and the doctor tells her that “all talking is causing complications and mental sufferings” (202). In opposition to the characterization of the Arabs as nightmarish fantasies in the novel, Hannah is very real, making her characterization as a neurotic female, afflicted with emotional instability, a perpetuation of negative female stereotypes. Oz's Hannah initiates a motif that continued in later conflict literature, compounding societal views of women as weak and emotionally unstable creatures.

Two other seminal novels written by men expanded the neurotic woman model, adding to the foundation laid by Oz of the woman being defined by neurosis and unrestrained sexual desire. Additionally, while both of them experimented with new
portrayals of the Arab character, their marginalized or unrealistic representation of Arabs was unable to fully bridge the gap between the Israeli Jew and the “other.” The first novel, *Ha me’ahevä* (1977) [*The Lover* (1978)] by A. B. Yehoshua, amplifies the problem of the woman driven to neurosis by the conflict. The very premise of the novel, based on a woman's unfulfilled lust and the search (conducted by her husband) for her lover, objectifies the female character and destabilizes family relationships. Furthermore, Na'im, the representative Arab in the novel, is presented as uncomfortable with his own Arabness. The multiple strands of characterization and point of view in the novel present a dysfunctional family, with the mother's neurosis and inability to function emotionally set forth as a catalyst for much of the family breakdown. Although one of the main female characters, Dafi, is not crazy, the characterization of her mother's insanity perpetuates the symbol of the woman as a catalyst for a dysfunctional and neurotic Israeli society. Additionally, although Yehoshua presented one of the first characterizations of an Arab from the Arab's point of view, his characterization is weak and fulfills stereotypical left-wing desires for the idealistic peaceful Palestinian. As Oppenheimer stated, “Yehoshua chose a character that is unqualified to represent the culture of the minority to which he belongs. His character is cut according to his role in the major culture—to be a lover without a social position, who is supposed to remain concealed and invisible. To play such a role is to be without an identity” (218). Na'im is anything but the stereotypical Arab adolescent—he leaves his village without regret, moving in with an elderly Israeli woman, and when he is working in the garage, he “cheer[s himself] up a bit by reciting a few lines of Bialik” (129). In this novel, Yehoshua has tried so hard to
overcome the “othering” of the Arab that Na’im has practically become Jewish-Israeli, losing much of his identity as an Arab. Although it could be argued that Na'im is blurring the boundaries between what it means to be Arab-Israeli and what it means to be Jewish-Israeli, I would suggest that his near-total rejection of his Arab background brings Na'im into the realm of a Jewish-Israeli character with little of his former Arab identity remaining.

Another novel from the same time period, Grossman's *Smile of the Lamb* (1983), was long heralded as a breakthrough in Israeli conflict literature because of its portrayal of the friendly, almost familial relationship between Khilmi and Uri. It breaks the stereotyped image of the Palestinian, but surprisingly continues the theme of the emotionally and morally unstable woman. Grossman's novel deviates from the other two novels in that its Israeli/Arab relationship is between two males instead of a male and a female and is not a sexual one; however, the woman in his novel is both crazy and sexually promiscuous. Shosh is used by both her husband and her lover, her husband's best friend, as an escape and a refuge from their military service, but both of them are quite unaware of the personal conflict raging in her own life. By characterizing Shosh, the only female character, in this way, Grossman continues the typification of women in conflict situations, presenting them as unfaithful and emotionally unstable, to be used by men in order to bring them relief from the conflict in which they are embroiled.

Additionally, although Grossman's characterization of Khilmi is revolutionary for its first-person viewpoint and distinctly Arab characteristics, it does not fully bridge the gap between the “other” of mainstream Palestinian society and the “standard” of mainstream.
Israeli society. After all, as Gila Ramras-Rauch pointed out, “the beautifully portrayed Hilmi is a man who lives on the border between reality and dream, weaving his own fairy tales, and who is considered by his neighbors as little more than a retarded fool” (xviii). The Arab character has become an approachable reality in Grossman's first novel, but he himself is an outsider in his society.

The characterization of the Arab “other” in these novels perpetuated societal stereotypes and reinforced the boundaries between Arabs and Israelis in the literary realm. Furthermore, the characterization of women as unfaithful and unstable, highlighted by these three novels, has numerous implications for the representation of women in conflict. This type of characterization, not surprisingly, is not unique to literature about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however. Nira Yuval-Davies, in her book on the relationship between gender and nations, stated that the interplay of power relations between the weak and the strong has created some common scenarios in literature. “A common literary theme,” she states, “is that of the disempowered and isolated woman of the hegemonic collectivity fantasizing and sometimes actually daring to develop sexual relationships with the available man of the racialized collectivity who is there as a servant or as a labourer” (51). This sort of relationship portrayed in literature by both male and female authors does several things: because the woman from the hegemonic collectivity is often viewed as an “other,” relationships with a different “other,” in many of these cases Palestinian men, is often more permissible because it doesn't completely upset the power structure of dominator/dominated. Secondly, however, it relegates the woman to a second-class position in the power structure of the
dominant. Her sexual interaction with the dominated “other,” while often putting her in the dominant position in the relationship, places her in a lower position within her own society because she is somehow “unclean” from the interaction. This type of characterization presents the woman as either weak (and unable to resist dominated men) or seeking an alternate power structure, one in which she can dominate. Furthermore, it relegates women even farther into the realm of “otherness.” As Esther Fuchs wrote: “The association of woman's allegedly hyperactive 'sexual instinct' with moral depravity reflects the male-centered perception of female sexuality as the expression of a fundamental and dangerous Otherness” (*Mythogenies* 67). These three male-authored novels, a representative sampling of much conflict literature from this period, highlight the “othering” of both the female and Arab characters, continuing the stereotype of self and other that was prominent in early Israeli literature.

**Israeli Women Writers: The Trend Continues**

Surprisingly, recent conflict novels written by Israeli women writers follow many of the same trends in their characterization of both women and Palestinians. Two Israeli novelists, Ronit Matalon and Michal Govrin, have both added their voices to the realm of Israeli conflict novels in which women are featured prominently. At first glance, it appears that these women writers are giving a new voice to the “liberated” woman: these female protagonists actively pursue relationships with Palestinians, and they seem unburdened by societally constructed moral and social structures. However, their characterizations of women follow quite closely the paradigm of “women in conflict literature” begun by male authors. This could be, of course, because of the market
demand; as Fuchs said, because the “‘national' or 'human' points of reference in Hebrew literature have for so long been associated or identified with masculinity, female-centered fiction cannot help being trivialized” (Mythogenies 120). Therefore, a new characterization of women might not have found a spot in the male-dominated literary sphere. However, in light of the fact that “the primary function of women's literature in Hebrew was to present the authentic female experience, while battling the stereotypical characterization of women in much of men's writing” (Rattok “Women's Writing”), it is disturbing to think that the main characterization of women in both male and female-authored conflict fiction is primarily focused on emotional instability and flagrant sexuality. Furthermore, the Palestinian characters in the novels only serve to highlight the Israeli woman's “progressiveness”—as lovers, they are merely used as foils of the female protagonist and reflect, rather than refract, stereotypical opinions about Palestinians in Israeli society.

Two recent examples of female-authored conflict literature are found in Sarah, Sarah (2000) [Bliss (2003)], by Ronit Matalon, and Hevzekim (2002) [Snapshots (2007)], by Michal Govrin. In Bliss, the female protagonist does not suffer from an obvious neurotic disorder; however, much of the novel focuses on an extra-marital love affair that she is pursuing with a Palestinian man from Gaza. Sarah is the stereotypical left-wing Israeli: working on a photography project in Gaza, she becomes involved in the legal battle surrounding a Palestinian girl hit by a stray Israeli bullet. On the surface, Sarah seems to portray everything about the “liberated woman”: she is educated, she is not afraid of or deterred by difficult political situations, and she is unshackled by the burdens
of home and family, choosing to spend her time instead pursuing unpopular political ideologies. However, by giving her the role of obsessed lover, Matalon unwittingly places this liberated woman, full of personality and femininity, in the category of the stereotyped woman-as-sexualized-symbol, following the paradigm set in earlier male-authored fiction. As with the earlier conflict titles, Matalon's female character seems to lack any moral boundaries or guidelines. A criticism of Oz's fiction could easily fit Matalon's protagonist: the characterization of the heroine “as the primary perpetrator of morally questionable actions stem[s] from the perennial inability of Oz's female characters to distinguish right from wrong...the female characters, who seem to lack the conscience and the value system necessary for this self-examination, also lack the capacity to experience conflict or to develop in a meaningful or positive ways” (Fuchs 61). Similarly, the lack of conscience and value system in Matalon's protagonist made her peace efforts appear trite and contrived, just another part of the show and not connected to a deep moral desire for peace.

Published just a few years after Bliss, Snapshots by Michal Govrin also imitates the established paradigm of promiscuity and infidelity of the female protagonist. Govrin's protagonist, however, is not limited in her infidelity as the other female protagonists were, pursuing an illicit relationship with just one or two other males. Rather, encounters with Ilana's lovers are scattered throughout the novel and throughout the world, making the Palestinian lover seem less like a foray into intercultural peacemaking and more like another notch on Ilana's stick of multi-cultural lovers. Furthermore, although the rest of the prominent characters are also mere symbolic pawns in the story, as the left-wing
daughter of a prominent Zionist and the wife of a Holocaust scholar, the protagonist is once again relegated to symbolic status, representing a new generation of Israelis with a complicated relationship with the land and idea of Israel.

The inability of both male and female authors to portray women as anything more than either a mere sexual symbol or a neurotic protagonist was breached somewhat in two short stories published in 1986 by Savyon Liebrecht. Although she doesn't completely break out of the mold, Liebrecht does present a new type of relationship between Palestinians and Israelis (woman to woman) and changes the original Palestinian male-Israeli female relationship from a sexual one to one based on work and employment. In “Bi-derekh le-Cedar City” [“The Road to Cedar City” (1998)], Liebrecht's female protagonist is a bit neurotic—nervous to a fault is an accurate description. However, despite this familiar paradigm of female neurosis, this story breaks with tradition and becomes a significant feminist call for peace and understanding when it is the women, both Israeli and Palestinian, that are able to reconcile their differences and connect (although only subtly) as mothers. “Cheder al ha-gag” [“A Room on the Roof”] (1998) is much more successful in breaking out of the crazy and sexualized woman paradigm, featuring a woman who, once liberated from her husband's dominating nature, develops a work-based relationship with several Palestinian laborers who come to work on her home. Although the story highlights the Israeli woman's deep-seated fears and prejudices, as well as some measure of sexual tension, it shows the possibilities and limits of a relationship with Palestinians from a woman that is neither crazy nor sexually promiscuous. However, the difference in genre and length complicate the paradigm that is
created by Liebrecht's short stories—without a counterpart in the novel, these two stories are not sufficient harbingers for a changing perspective in conflict writing.

In addition to perpetuating the image of the neurotic and promiscuous woman, an emphasis on the woman-as-mother is conspicuously absent from these novels (although in this case Liebrecht's short stories also break the mold). In all of the previously referenced novels, when the women did have children, they were often relegated to a second-tier status in the mother's life; the ones who do care for their children are mentally and emotionally incompetent, and the “liberated” and independent women are too busy pursuing deviant political ideologies to have much time left for their offspring. Yael S. Feldman noted this curiosity, stating that “the marginalization of motherhood in Israeli literature has not significantly changed even with women's admission into this writing scene...the early feminist rewriting of traditional gender roles—as late as the 1980s—followed the Beauvoirian perception that motherhood and liberatory feminism are mutually exclusive” (109). Expanding upon Feldman's observation, these female-authored novels from the early 2000's also seem to fall into this same category. Whether or not these novels are “feminist” novels is arguable; however, in the case of Bliss and Snapshots, the female protagonists fall into the category of “feminist rewriting of traditional gender roles” because they are afforded liberties and responsibilities outside of traditional and historical gender roles. Excluding motherhood from the mix creates in these novels the appearance of representing the “liberated woman” in Israeli society because it breaks away from the traditional model of womanhood being defined by motherhood; however, by continuously portraying women who are focused on selfish
pursuits and personal gratification, the female-authored view of womanhood became that of an irresponsible and promiscuous woman with little tie to or care for society and stable family relationships.

*To the End of the Land: Conflict, Motherhood, and a New Feminist Paradigm*

The long tradition of the female character in conflict literature being defined by her identity as being either crazy or sexually promiscuous (or both) makes David Grossman's representation of the female protagonist in *To the End of the Land* (2011) appear radical and revolutionary. Ora, afraid of receiving the news that her son has been killed in a military conflict, decides to flee civilization and hike in northern Israel for several weeks until the danger has passed and her son, Ofer, has returned home from his military service. Rebelling against the insanity implicit in the idea that a mother should sacrifice her son for the country, Ora determines that if she is not home to receive the news, her son will somehow be spared. As the reader journeys along the Israel National Trail that bisects Israel north-to-south with Ora and Avram, Ofer's biological father and Ora's hiking partner, Grossman unfolds the story of a family and a society torn apart by the ongoing conflict. In doing so, Grossman resists the master narrative of masculinity and military might that seems to present the ultimate solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather, focusing on Ora's saving power as a mother, Grossman suggests that stability in society will only come with increased stability in family relationships.

In presenting this view of the individual empowered through family relationships, Grossman resists the stereotypes of females and Palestinians presented in earlier literature. In opposition to the female characters in the several other Israeli conflict novels
where gender plays a vital role, Grossman's female protagonist is empowered because of her status as a mother and not in spite of or disengaged from it. Furthermore, Grossman's representation of Sami, the Arab-Israeli character in the novel, bridges the distance between the “self” and the “other” that was so apparent in earlier conflict novels. Although the differences between Sami's Arabness and Ora's Israeliness are highlighted, the normalization of Sami's role in both Jewish-Israeli society and Ora's family life make him not an exotic or feared “other” but rather an individual who plays a vital part in society. Through Ora's unique role and portrayal as a mother and Sami's representation as an Arab who is fully integrated into Israeli society, Grossman bridges the gap between the Israeli “standard” and both the female and the Arab “other” in Israeli literature, creating a new paradigm for both depictions and understandings of the “other” as well as a new model for the empowered woman in Israeli society.

Sami's characterization as an Arab-Israeli challenges and complicates previous stereotypical representations of Arabs in Israeli literature: he is complex as an individual, and although he is fully integrated into Israeli society, he also has a very strong Arab and Palestinian identity. As an Arab-Israeli who continuously passes as Jewish-Israeli, Sami's character blurs the boundaries between Israeliness and Jewishness, questioning the link between nationality and ethnicity. One evening at a checkpoint near Tel Aviv, it is Ora, not Sami, who arouses suspicion, and it is only Sami's comment that Ora is “one of ours” even though she looks like a “lefty” (104-5) that diffuses the policeman's suspicion. Although he easily passes as Jewish-Israeli, however, Sami is not merely a representation of a left-wing idealistic view of Palestinians or, like Na'im in The Lover, an Arab who
looks and acts like a Jew; rather, he has a strong Arab and Palestinian identity. When Ora requests that he drive her and her son to his military post, it almost destroys their friendship: when he realized that “Ora was asking him to add his modest contribution to the Israeli war effort,” “an ashen current...spread slowly through the dark skin of his face, the soot from a fire that leaped up and died down inside him in an instant” (57-8).

Furthermore, a large section of a chapter is devoted to that awkward and friendship-destroying ride as Sami drove Ofer to his military post in the West Bank, placing the conflict of interests between Israelis and Palestinians in the forefront of the reader's consciousness. Grossman does not downplay Sami's Arabness but rather emphasizes it—even the leopard skin upholstery in his taxi is “Arab taste” (61).

With this complex characterization of Sami, Grossman moves past the stereotyped Palestinian and presents a human being, not a category, for review. Additionally, Grossman further sidesteps the danger of “othering” the Palestinian character in his novel by portraying the almost familial relationship that Sami has with Ora and her family. Sami is a long-time family friend of Ora and Ilan: “they have been to his home in Abu Ghosh for family celebrations, they know his wife, Inaam, and they helped out with connections and money when his two older sons wanted to emigrate to Argentina” (49).

The emphasis on the friendship between families, instead of just between individuals, widens the reach of this conciliatory type of relationship; it is not just an individual or one-on-one relationship, but rather the mutual understanding and trust extends across genders and generations. This familial and reconciliatory relationship also changes the portrayal of the Arab, almost always the “other” in earlier Israeli literature, to becoming
an integral and necessary part of society—still different, but not othered in the same
distant and unaffected way that Arabs in many earlier novels were portrayed.

Grossman's representation of the other Palestinians in the novel also resists the
stereotypified dangerous or exotic other, presenting them as real human beings living and
acting within the bounds of a complex and difficult conflict. Later on the same day that
he and Ora participated in silent ideological struggles as he took her son to his military
post, Sami and Ora take a young boy to receive emergency medical attention in Jaffa.
Here, the effects of the extended conflict become even more poignant. No longer is the
conflict relegated to the sphere of weapons and warriors; rather, the effects of generations
of struggle are described in relation to those whose lives are defined by their legal and
national status as a result of the conflict. Even before Sami and Ora reach the school
where the refugees are housed, Grossman confronts the reader with the uncomfortable
realities of the situation in Israel/Palestine: when Ora is surprised that Yazdi, as a West
Bank Palestinian, has never seen the sea, Sami asks her, “This one, where's he gonna see
the sea? At the promenade of the refugee camp?” Furthermore, when Yazdi smells the
sea, “his face has a strange, almost tortured expression, as if its features cannot tolerate
the happiness” (107). In this short passage, Grossman exposes both the problem of the
refugees and the problem of passage (or lack thereof) into Israel for Palestinians, and he
features the centrality of the sea as one of the ultimate symbols of longing for
Palestinians. This longing for the sea is so strong for the land-locked West Bank
Palestinians that it is frequently brought up as evidence of the inhumanity and unfairness
of the situation—although some of them live just a few miles from the sea, they
complain, they have never even been able to go to the beach. Recently, some Israeli
women have even formed a group called “We Will Not Obey” that organizes illegal trips
to the beach for West Bank Palestinian women, protesting “what they...consider unjust
laws” (“Joys at the Beach” 1) and risking arrest so that Palestinian women can see the
sea. Using this powerful symbol of the sea, Grossman brings to the forefront issues of
security, freedom, and humanity that haunt the political decisions made in
Israel/Palestine. Grossman's commentary on the realities of the occupation, however, is
not a trite complaint or a lengthy diatribe given by one of the characters. Rather, by using
a ill child as the catalyst for this symbol, Grossman presents something more deeply
psychologically uncomfortable, and more difficult to argue with, than a mere rant against
the occupation.

In addition to her relationship with Sami and Yazdi, Ora's experience with the
Palestinians from the West Bank taking refuge at an elementary school further complicate
the perception of the political climate in Israel. With the illegal residents seeking medical
help and shelter at the school, it is almost as though Grossman has created a mini refugee
camp for the characters. All of the Palestinians at the school are depicted in positions of
vulnerability and weakness: Ora sees them “huddled around a cluster of desks
whispering, or sitting on the floor and warming up dinners on little gas cookers, or asleep
in their clothes on desks and chairs joined together;...from other rooms she hears stifled
moans of pain and murmurs of comfort. There is a sharp smell of iodine in the air” (112).
Without taking us to Jenin or Qalandia or Dheisheh, Grossman opens the readers' eyes to
the life of a Palestinian refugee. However, just as with Yazdi and the sea, Grossman
leaves little room for ideological contention about the value of security or the rightness of political decisions. He doesn't use the rant of a left-wing Israeli or a disgruntled Palestinian to bring up the issue of the refugees. Rather, everything about the “mini refugee camp” is a symbol of vulnerability: it's housed in an elementary school, women and children abound, it is a temporary shelter for the transient, and it is a place for healing and recovery. Furthermore, the irony of Ora's desire to “seek political asylum with refugees” and the cardboard seal hanging over the Palestinians in one of the classrooms with the caption “Recon-seal-iation” is inherent but not explicit, suggesting but not demanding a recognition of the complex and complicated political and humanitarian questions that cannot be resolved with simple answers.

Sami and the Palestinian refugees are main characters only at the beginning of the novel. Once Ora flees to the north with Avram, they fade into the background of Ora's memory. However, being placed strategically near the beginning of the novel, they play an integral role in setting the tone for the rest of the story. The presence of the Palestinians in Ora's life and consciousness brings this novel squarely into the realm of Israeli “conflict literature,” engaging with the themes of conflict and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Thus by giving Ora and her family an intimate and friendly relationship with Sami and his family, Grossman explores the possibility of friendship and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. Ora and Sami both need each other, even after the tension-filled afternoon driving Ofer to his post, and each becomes an enabler for the other as they transport Yazdi to Tel Aviv and Ora picks up
Avram and goes north. This interdependence between Israelis and Palestinians breaks down the borders drawn through the “othering” literature of previous years.

The Mother: A New Paradigm for the Empowered Woman

In addition to creating a new paradigm for representing Palestinians and Arabs in Israeli literature, Grossman's emphasis on Ora's role as mother also moves beyond the typified neurotic and irresponsible woman in previous conflict literature, representing the Israeli woman in a different manner. Ora, arguably, is crazy: even Avram mutters to himself, “She's mad...totally lost her mind” (121) when Ora explains her plan to go on a hike to somehow save her son. However, her craziness does not follow the usual pattern of increasing insanity, forcing the protagonist into a downward spiral of emotional paralysis. Rather, her neurotic behavior is channeled and bounded: when her son returns from his military service, she too will return to normal life. Her “insanity” is also contrasted with the “insanity” of expecting a mother to send her son willingly to a military post where he may be killed or maimed, making Ora's choice seem like the more sane of the two. Instead of othering Ora as a character, Grossman uses the insanity complex to highlight the illogic of a military society. Furthermore, Grossman's focus on Ora as a mother introduces a radical paradigm shift from the “liberated feminist” ideal of a woman completely disconnected from home and family. Ora's power in the novel comes from the very fact that she is a mother—that somehow her parentage can save her son from the throes of conflict. Furthermore, although working within the confines of a very dysfunctional family structure, Grossman's emphasis on fatherhood as well as
motherhood seems to point to the family as an integral factor in buffering individuals from the tragic effects of conflict.

Ora's character, a female protagonist in this very overt conflict novel, seems to fit in nicely with the feminist conflict theories suggesting that the patriarchal model of war and conflict is contrasted by a feminist understanding of peace. But what exactly is a feminist understanding of peace? Many prominent feminist scholars have agreed with Sally Miller Gearhart's definition of feminism, which is “at the very least the rejection of the conquest/conversion model of interaction and the development of new forms of relationship which allow for wholeness in the individual and differences among people and entities.” According to Gearhart, feminism is “an ideology of change which rises out of the experiences of women, out of the experiences of our bodies,” and is incredibly helpful in communication because women have historically been thought of as “receptacles, as listeners, as hearers, as holders, nurturers, as matrices, as environments and creators of environments” (Foss and Griffin 200). The profound emphasis on Ora's motherhood and her power as a mother seems to strengthen these theories, pointing to the woman as an empowered agent of peace in the midst of conflict.

Grossman's use of images of the womb and the motherly qualities of Ora woven through the novel fortify the mother-as-peacegiver construct, entering into almost all of the depictions of war and battle. While Ora is running from the dreaded news that her son has been killed in active military service, she feels her son's presence in her body, almost as if she was pregnant, but this time with his adult spirit instead of his developing fetus. After several days of hiking in the wilderness, she begins to feel a dull pain spreading
through her body: “a different, unfamiliar sort of ache, stubborn and persistent and consuming, and at times she even thought it was a flesh-eating bacteria.” As the pain grew worse, “it occurred to her that her pain was Ofer. She felt him in her stomach, beneath her heart, a dark and restless spot of emotion. He moved and shifted and turned inside her, and she moaned in surprise, frightened by his violence and desperation” (148).

Ora questions why his presence was so strong and needy inside of her, “feeding and sucking on [her]” and “tearing her up from the inside,” and finally realizes that “he needed her now in order to exist...just as he had once needed her to be born” (150).

By subsuming Ofer inside of her body, Ora becomes once again the life-giver. She is neither a policy maker nor an officer in the military, and thus cannot protect her son by stopping the war or sending him out of harm's way. Neither can she keep him safe by following a model of violence, joining the army and staying by her son's side in order to preemptively destroy any enemy that might harm him. Rather, it is her motherhood that she believes will save him, in the same way that it originally gave him life. She feels his spirit in her womb, sucking away her life and energy, but she is willing to sacrifice for him if it prolongs his life.

In addition to saving Ofer, the womb imagery is also used when Avram, Ofer's biological father, is in the midst of conflict. The lone survivor at an Israeli military stronghold in the middle of the Sinai, Avram buries himself in a small room underground. Grossman describes him as “lying on his back, underground, in the little womb he'd built for himself, while the Egyptian army swarmed around him” (506, emphasis added). Although Avram is eventually captured, it is specifically his self-made womb that saves
him for such a long period from the grasp of the enemy. Seeking the maternal in the midst of conflict is a theme that runs through the novel: one time when Ofer was home on leave, he told his mother about a cat with two kittens that he has decided to adopt, “you know, just so I'd have something maternal there” (538). These images specific to women and motherhood promote the feminist ideals of “the rejection of the conquest/conversion model of interaction” and “wholeness in the individual” cited by Gearhart, especially in a situation of conflict.

Adding to the life-giving imagery of the womb and motherhood, in several instances in the novel Ora's solutions have better outcomes than Avram's. In a gender-based analysis of these situations, the traditional female method (non-violent and emotional) produces better results than the traditional male method (violent and dominating). One rather bizarre scene occurs after several days of Ora and Avram hiking in the wilderness. Sitting down in the middle of the field taking a coffee break, Avram and Ora are suddenly surrounded by wild dogs. Avram follows the typical model of violence in such a situation, shouting at Ora to kick and scream at them. When Ora grabs Avram for support, “he turns to her furiously and his own face [was] like an animal's for a second—a peace-loving, vegetarian, and generally fearful animal. A gnu or a llama or a camel that has suddenly found itself in the midst of a massacre” (314). When killing one of the dogs doesn't deter the rest, Avram tells Ora to grab stones to throw, and he starts hitting the dogs with a stick. However, just at this moment of fear-filled violence, Ora starts to whistle—“not a tune. Something meaningless and monotonous and mechanical that sound[ed] like the hum of a broken appliance” (316). In contrast to Avram's
animalistic violent response, whose “beard is wild, his face alarmingly sharp” (316), Ora confronts the situation calmly, whistling instead of hitting. Miraculously the dogs leave, and Ora and Avram continue on their hike.

In this situation with the dogs, Avram responded according to the traditional model of aggression: when faced with violence, he responds with violence. Ora, however, employing a non-violent model of distraction, successfully changed a violent and dangerous situation into one of friendship (as one of the dogs, the only female in the bunch, remained with them for the rest of their journey). Here, Grossman represents some of the traditional ideals of masculinity, including the ability to protect both the self and others, in a situation that is particularly hostile. However, Avram's violence only increases the fury of the enemy. Interestingly, it is Ora's vulnerability that causes her to seek for a non-violent solution. She describes herself as having “a completely un-survivor-like tendency...to linger on the minor details” (313) and can barely even pull herself up after she trips when the dogs come upon them. Because of her weakness and vulnerability, she looks for an alternate method to diffuse the violence. Furthermore, her emotional ties to her own dog allow her to see the dogs as formerly domesticated creatures and not just wild beasts, prompting her to whistle instead of kick.

With this solution to the violence, Grossman's novel does several things. First of all, it shows that the traditionally masculine model of violence is less effective than a non-violent solution that might be considered more feminine because it includes emotional involvement and displays vulnerability. Secondly, it proposes a new model for conflict resolution that is not based in violence but rather in distraction and emotional
connection. It is only when Ora remembers her own dog (and, by extension, the former domesticity of the wild dogs) that she is inspired with the solution to their immediate danger. A rather obvious parallel to this situation is the violence often associated with the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, especially as Grossman uses the common themes of vulnerability and stone throwing to depict the problem with the dogs. Taken in this context, this passage suggests that until an emotional connection with the enemy and non-violent solutions are pursued, the perpetuating cycle of conflict and violence will persist. Furthermore, by situating the non-violent solution within his female protagonist, Grossman reinforces the paradigm of women as peace creators.

**A Multi-faceted View of Femininity, Conflict, and Peace**

However, the view of feminism and motherhood as presented in the novel is not nearly so cut-and-dry as the simplistic feminist model of woman-as-nurturer, listener, and hearer. Although the majority of focus in the novel is on Ora and her lifesaving role as mother, other encounters with women in the novel complicate the idea of women as peace-creators. As Ora travels along the Israel National Trail, she recalls the past year of fear and uncertainty in the wake of numerous terrorist bombings. One morning, she recalls, she sat eating at a cafe. A “short, stocky woman wearing a heavy coat” had come in, “holding a baby covered with a blanket on her shoulder” (542). Under normal circumstances, this event would arouse little or no suspicion. However, in the midst of a long string of terrorist suicide bombings, every public space was a potential death trap. Because of the fear and uncertainty created by the situation, people in the cafe were immediately suspicious of this mother, her heavy coat, and the bundle covered by a
blanket. She was not a young woman, Grossman writes, “and perhaps that was what seemed suspicious, because suddenly a whisper of 'It's not a baby' flew through the air, and the place turned upside down in an instant. People leaped up, overturned chairs as they fled, knocked over plates and glasses, fought one another to get to the door” (542). Although in this situation it was, indeed, a baby and not a bomb, the fact that a woman and a baby, usually viewed as signs of peace (or at least weakness and vulnerability) could be viewed as a symbol of death and violence, and indeed could cause so much violence and commotion, complicates the place and image of women and motherhood in conflict situations.

At another point in the novel, Ora struggles with something her son did as part of his military service. Her husband tells her that her son needs her support, not her judgment, and then states, “You're his mother, you're not some Mother for Peace, okay?” Shocked by the comparison, Ora wonders, “What did she have to do with those leftist women and their supposedly neutral checkpoint observations? She didn't even like them! There was something defiant and annoying and unfair about them and the whole idea, coming to harass soldiers while they worked” (548). In this instance, the supposedly strong relationship between mothers and peace is challenged. Although their name, Mothers for Peace, suggests women looking for a peaceful end to the conflict, they specifically spend their time at checkpoints, manned by conscripted soldiers (most of them still kids themselves), to make sure that Palestinians are being treated fairly and in accordance with human rights principles. This juxtaposition of mothers and teenagers barely out of high school, most of them young enough to be these mothers' children, in a
situation of conflict complicates the picture of mothers and peace. Despite the pervasive images of motherhood and maternity as life-giving and peace-promoting in the novel, these situations suggest that the idea that women and feminism always reject the “conquest/conversion model of interaction” is much too simplistic of a model in the midst of conflict and war.

In addition to a multi-faceted picture of women in conflict situations and in contrast to the stereotypical characters in the popular novels mentioned above, Grossman also presents a complex representation of the varied reasons for the stratification of Israeli political society, including in Ora's own family. At a young age, Ofer expressed the fear of many Israelis when realizing the number and geographical position of Israel's enemies. “Mommy,” he once asked Ora, “who's against us?” Demanding the names of the Arab and Muslim countries, Ora finally gives in to him and starts naming: “Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon. But not Egypt—we have peace with them!...Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Kuwait, and Yemen...and you add Iran—not exactly Arabs, but not exactly our friends, either...Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria...Indonesia and Malaysia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and probably Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan too—none of those stans sounds so great to you” (373). Faced with the enormity of the situation, Ofer breaks down one night, hallucinating all through the night and imagining that there is an Arab in the room with him. He is only pacified when his mother takes him to Latrun, an outdoor museum with numerous tanks and other fighting vehicles on display, and explains to him the might of the Israeli military. Recognizing the strength of the Israeli military seems to be far from the peace-promoting position that is advocated at other parts of the novel. However, by
highlighting the very real fears of many in Israeli society, Grossman gives credence to the desire of most Israelis for a strong military presence in the country.

Further complications to the simplistic perspective of an easy peace and reconciliation in Israeli/Palestinian society are introduced by Avram's experience as a prisoner of war, held and tortured badly by Egyptian forces. Avram and Ilan's experiences in the war are described in great detail, recalling the fear and hopelessness of the failure of the campaign in the Sinai during the Yom Kippur war of 1973. Furthermore, Avram's experience being tortured and held captive by the Egyptians was so painful and dehumanizing that he became a mere shell of a man, even twenty years after his release. In the context of an Israeli novel, this description of conflict, violence, and fear in great detail is a unique and important way to address the fears and reasoning underlying much of Israeli society's political opinions. Within Israeli society, one critique of the leftist peace camp is that those who hold those opinions are naïve and have not experienced the true horrors of war on a personal level. Grossman stated that even he himself was accused of being a “naive leftist who would never send his own children into the army, who didn't know what life was made of” (Guardian 1). However, by presenting multiple perspectives on the conflict while still promoting peace in this novel, Grossman complicates the stereotypes and historical paradigms used when looking at the conflict. Through his complex characterizations of both Palestinians and Israeli women, Grossman presents new paradigms of femininity, motherhood, conflict, and Palestinians. Womanhood and femininity are empowered by motherhood and Palestinians and Israelis are integrated and interdependent in this novel, thus expanding the reach of conflict.
literature and providing new paradigms of representation for both women and
Palestinians in Israeli literature.

Conclusion: Becoming the Other

This emphasis on motherhood as a paradigm of power and a humanistic
representation of Palestinians and Arab-Israelis written by an Israeli man raises many
questions about the efficacy of the model of the “other” in literature. Can a male writer
effectively write the female experience in a novel? Can an Israeli writer give an accurate
representation of Palestinians? These questions are considered in Grossman's essay on
writing the other, “The Desire to Be Gisella.” In it, he discusses one of his primary
motives for writing: “the wish to strip away what protects [him] from the Other” (Writing
31). As human beings, he writes, it is natural for us to protect ourselves from those who
are different than us; after all, “people are rarely eager to be truly exposed even to what
exists within themselves” (34). The fear of the uncontrollable makes us “uneasy about
what truly occurs deep inside the Other...And perhaps it is more than unease; perhaps it is
an actual fear of the mysterious, nonverbal, unprocessed core, that which cannot be
subjected to any social taming, to any refinement, politeness, or tact; that which is
instinctive, wild, and chaotic, not at all politically correct” (35). As such, it can be
difficult for both writers and readers to fully expose themselves to and comprehend the
“other,” both in literature and society.

However, if we, as readers and writers, are willing to expose ourselves to the
Other, to experience him or her fully and completely as an individual, we are more able
to understand the very definition of humanity and the human experience. As Grossman states,

Even if, almost inevitably, we “project” our soul onto the Other we are writing about, and even if we often “use” the Other to tell stories about ourselves and to understand ourselves, still the wish that I am speaking of, in its purest essence, aspires precisely in the opposite direction: to boldly cast off the shackles of my “I” and reach the core of the Other, as an Other, and to then experience the Other as one who exists to himself and for himself, as a whole world with its own validity and internal logic. It is then that we are able to catch a glimpse of—and even linger in—the place that is usually so difficult and rare to know in another. (37)

As a novelist contributing to the Israeli cannon, Grossman breaks down the dividing barrier surrounding the “other” of both the female and the Arab by presenting the reader with nuanced individuals with multi-faceted problems and personalities. However, he also invites his readers to “become” the other in order to understand the other better, instead of just understanding themselves better. The process of temporarily “becoming” does more than merely break down the dividing barrier between the self and the other; rather, it transforms the self, creating readers and writers that understand the other from a position outside of themselves and their own experiences.

But why would such a representation be important? What harm does the portrayal of women as irresponsible and neurotic and Palestinians as uni-dimensional creatures do in society, especially when it is presented in the format of fictional novels? And what
good do new paradigms in fiction do for a society that is torn by a very real conflict? First of all, the portrayal of women and Palestinians as stereotypical symbols perpetuates negative societal perceptions of the historical “other”; although it is just fictional literature, it both reflects and maintains societal attitudes and opinions. By changing the paradigms in literature, societal attitudes are affected and, over time, can be changed. Secondly, new paradigms such as Grossman's break down historical boundaries of the “other,” presenting the characters as individuals instead of categories. When people are presented as individuals, there is a much smaller tendency to fall into the groupings of “us” and “them” because “me” and “you” work better. And finally, Grossman's emphasis on motherhood and family provides a new solution to the problem of the broken and conflict-torn society in Israel. Rather than outsourcing possibilities and hopes for peace, waiting on the politicians and peace talks, Grossman seems to be saying, find peace and a buffer from the effects of conflict within the family structure. Although radical in its simplicity, Grossman's representation of motherhood, Palestinians, and the family itself liberates both men and women and both Palestinians and Israelis in Israeli society, giving both Israel/Palestine and the rest of the world a new way of looking and longing for peace.
Conclusion: Women, Conflict, and Exposing the Uncomfortable Things in Society

In highlighting the woman's voice in society, both Khalifeh and Grossman propose an alternative view to the society, family, and soul-destroying conflict that affects both Israelis and Palestinians. Naturally, due to the differences in the societies and the power structure under which each operates, the novels present different pictures of their own societies and different ways of looking at conflict. Grossman, living in the militarily dominant Israeli society, depicts the worries and fears that accompany war from a perspective that is less concerned about losing the war and more concerned about losing friends, family members, or established ways of life in the conflict. As such, he is more able to depict friendly, almost familial relationships between Israelis and Arabs within a society in which both come into contact with each other frequently. Khalifeh, on the other hand, depicts life in the Palestinian society under Israeli occupation, and thus her possibilities of interaction between Palestinians and Israelis are more limited. While in *Wild Thorns* she explores to some extent relationships between Palestinians who work on the “inside” and their Israeli coworkers, contact with Israelis in *The Inheritance* is relegated to encounters with soldiers at checkpoints and reflects the reality of many Palestinians' limited contact with Israelis. Her focus in *The Inheritance* is less on interaction between the two communities, instead pointing out the problems within her own society. Despite these differences, though, both novels promote the voice of the
woman, and especially the mother, and the recognition of her place and power in society as a potential solution to much of the fragmentation occurring in both societies in the wake of the conflict.

However, the differences in Israeli and Palestinian societies necessitate a difference in the approach that Khalifeh and Grossman take in their portrayal of women in their respective societies. The crisis of motherhood in Khalifeh's novel seems to be in direct contrast to the empowered role that Ora, as a mother, is given in Grossman's novel. This difference reflects the difference in both time and political circumstance between the two novels. The Inheritance, published in 1997, was written in the wake of the Oslo accords and before the start of the second Intifada. As such, Khalifeh's portrayal of Palestinian women and the Israeli “other” is much different than Grossman's novel, written 11 years later. Unlike both Wild Thorns and Grossman's To The End of the Land, The Inheritance presents little interaction between Palestinians and Israelis. Reflecting the reality of many Palestinians in the wake of the Oslo accords and their limited interaction with Israelis, The Inheritance focuses instead on the breakdown of Palestinian society due to its internal weaknesses. Her focus on women highlights a gendered, rather than a national, “other.” The lack of stable mothers and families in The Inheritance exposes many of the problems at the root of society, as a result both of the Israeli occupation and the greediness and power-hungry attitude of many in Palestinian society.

Grossman, on the other hand, focuses specifically on the mother and her saving power. Written in the wake of the second Intifada, Grossman's novel reflects the reality of a country dominated by a complex political and military system. Ora's crazy act of
resistance, running away, highlights the insanity of a country's expectation for a mother to willingly sacrifice her son in order to protect the general populace, especially in military operations that may or may not be supported by everyone in Israeli society. Centering the narrative directly on the mother and the family, Grossman changes the focus from the political to the personal and explores the effect that military and political decisions can have on the family.

Grossman's family structure in *To the End of the Land* is far from perfect. Divorce, a child born out of wedlock, long periods of family separation, a deeply troubled ex-prisoner of war, and an uneasy relationship between parents and sons—all of these easily fall into a textbook description of a dysfunctional family. Such a depiction fits the reality of a society torn apart by decades of conflict and these family problems mirror the problems in society, but they hardly qualify as a creation of a new paradigm of family stability in Israeli literature. It is Grossman's *focus* on the woman's voice, however, and not the reality of the family structure, that provides a new way of looking at the results of and possible solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, although Grossman depicts a far more powerful motherhood than Khalifeh, in the end we are still unsure if Ora's motherhood actually saved her son or not. An ending where Ora was actually able to save Ofer by running away would not fit the uncertain reality of Israeli society. Rather, Grossman emphasizes the *possibility* of power outside of military might, just as Khalifeh explores the possibility of power structures that more fully incorporate women and mothers.
Why this emphasis on women and mothers? What is it that women and mothers can bring to a decades-old conflict? Khalifeh, writing from long experience as a dominated woman in Palestinian society, is clearly advocating for women's rights in reaction to her own experience and that of other women in her society. Grossman, perhaps more surprisingly, also advocates for a recognition of the woman's voice and gives the mother's voice great power in a society torn by conflict. This focus on women in both recent novels suggests that as the conflict has stretched on, the old paradigms of gender and societal relationships are no longer sufficient, necessitating the creation of new ones.

By why women? Why specifically mothers? Sara Ruddick, in her landmark study *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (1989) suggests that it is specifically maternal thinking that promotes peace and non-violence. Although she specifically talks about mothers and their role in society, she advocates the idea that maternal thinking is something that both men and women are capable of: “A woman is no more, a man no less 'naturally' a mother, no more or less obligated to maternal work, than a man or a woman is 'naturally' a scientist or firefighter or is obligated to become one” (41). Rather, it is the caregiving, the concern for others, and the nurturing, historically relegated to the duties and responsibilities of motherhood, that Ruddick suggests creates a society focused on political peace. Ruddick's vision of the type of peace that results from maternal thinking is this:

A feminist maternal politics of peace: peacemakers create a communal suspicion of violence, a climate in which peace is desired, a way of living
in which it is possible to learn and to practice nonviolent resistance and strategies of reconciliation. This description of peacemaking is a description of mothering. Mothers take their work seriously and create a women's politics of resistance...As men become mothers and mothers invent public resistances to violence, mothering and peacemaking become a single, womanly-manly work—a feminist, maternal politics of peace.

(244)

Perhaps Grossman and Khalifeh, in advocating for an increased recognition of the woman's voice and the mother's power in society, agree to some extent with Ruddick's proposition that maternal thinking is, at its very core, an alternative to the hegemonic power structures promoted and perpetuated by conflict and oppression. These mothers, both in Khalifeh and Grossman's novels as well as in society, “insofar as they become publicly visible as mothers who are resisting violence and inventing peace...transform the meaning of 'motherhood'” (Ruddick 241). Obvious in Grossman's novel and hinted at in Khalifeh's, the women who are powerful in their motherhood upset traditional power structures and suggest a power inherent in placing the needs of another above one's own.

However, the uncertain and ever-changing reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict hardly allows for a simple gendered solution to decades of war and political upheavals. Although both Khalifeh and Grossman advocate women and the woman's voice as an unconventional possibility for a solution to each society's problems, neither novel presents the woman and the mother as the ultimate solution. Khalifeh exposes the crisis of motherhood in a society where the woman's voice and women's rights have been
subordinated to national needs. Grossman also exposes a crisis of motherhood—despite his focus on Ora's power as a mother, her first son is estranged from her, her husband has left her, and the question of whether or not she actually saved her second son is left purposefully uncertain. Ora's journey as a mother is fraught with military tragedies, family crises, and political problems that pervade her family life. Although both Grossman and Khalifeh promote the woman's voice in literary representations of the conflict, their common representation of the crisis of motherhood in their respective societies complicate the notion that mothers or maternal thinking can somehow provide the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In addition to exposing the crisis of motherhood in their societies, both Khalifeh and Grossman mercilessly expose many of the other problems inherent in their own societies. Khalifeh, speaking about her unique position as a Palestinian woman writer, suggests that this type of exposure is something that is largely absent from male-authored Palestinian literature:

As a female writer, I believe that I was able to really dig into different aspects of Palestinian society. Few men can do likewise, because when you look into a mirror you do not want to see how ugly you are. You do not want to see the dimension of things. Men are not used to taking a brave look at things that might hurt their soul. A woman on the other hand, is different. This is because of her education, and how she is raised as a marginal being and an outsider. She is accustomed to look at things not in
a glorified manner, but in a more realistic one. (“Sahar Khalifa—an Interview” 1)

Using her novel as a mirror to look at “how ugly [things] are,” Khalifeh takes a brave look at things that might hurt the soul of Palestinian society, knowing that only by recognizing the ugliness and dangerous internal factions that threaten the very core of the Palestinian existence as a stable society can a powerful and unified society be created and sustained. Resisting the literary ideal of portraying only the strengths of the Palestinian society and the injustices to which they have been exposed, Khalifeh provides a new way of looking at resistance by exposing the gendered problems within her own society in a way that, according to her, could only be done by a woman.

As a writer, Grossman revels in his stories' ability to destabilize and dissolve what he calls “all the comfortable protections of my life” (“Diary” 1). Confronting what is ugly in his own life and society, exposing the fragile foundations of self and the other, Grossman paints a picture of “the places that are most dangerous and frightening for [him].” It is no wonder, he writes,

that it is so hard to get into a new story. The soul is alarmed. The soul – like every living thing – seeks to continue in its movement, in its routine. Why should it take part in this process of self-destruction? What is bad about the way it is? Maybe this is why it takes me such a long time to write a novel. As if in the first months I have to remove layer after layer of cataract from my recalcitrant soul.” (“Diary” 1)
Painfully apparent in this recent novel, Grossman's “self-destruction” of the soul of Israeli society exposes the weakness of the foundation of a society built on military might at the expense of personal and familial stability. In this way Grossman actively resists the idea that the only important thing, or even the most important thing, in a stable society is national security.

Therefore, in using the woman's voice to expose the weaknesses in Israeli and Palestinian society, Grossman and Khalifeh join their novels to an expanded notion of resistance literature. Confronting stereotypes and political paradigms of conflict and power, these novels suggest that alternate paths to a purposeful peace are yet to be explored. Rejecting the binary boundaries that have perpetuated in literary and societal conversations about the conflict, gender, and the cause of instability in society, *To The End of the Land* and *The Inheritance* suggest that both national security and national identity are in peril when the strength and stability of the individual and the family are ignored. However, neither novel provides a simplistic view of women and mothers as the ultimate solution to the conflict. What each novel does by focusing on the woman's voice is show the multi-faceted perspectives of women in conflict. Tessler and Warriner, criticizing aspects of feminist theory, argue that the attributing nurturance, empathy, and caring to all women “reinforce[s] traditional stereotypes about women and retard[s] the feminist goal of emancipation” and that “there are no 'essential components' that characterize all women” (253). Similarly, both Grossman and Khalifeh present a multi-faceted view to womanhood and feminism in conflict. Their focus on the woman's voice brings a new dimension of criticism to societal responses to the Israeli-Palestinian
conflict and highlights the importance of recognizing gendered differences in conflict situations.

In the end, readers of these two novels are left with many questions and not many answers. Did Ofer survive? What about Ora's friendship with Sami? What happened when Ora finished hiking and went back home? What happened to Futna's baby? Who got the family inheritance? The unfinished stories leave an unsettled feeling of inconclusiveness to readers who are used to having endings that tie everything together nicely. However, I would suggest that neither novel presents an easy solution because the complicated nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not lend itself to easy solutions. Indeed, what Philip Metres said about the endings of *Wild Thorns* and *The Smile of the Lamb* could easily apply to *The Inheritance* and *To the End of the Land*: “the final scenes leave us with a powerful sense that nothing has changed” (101). In these novels, however, the thing that has changed is the gender dynamic in society. Coming from a position of the “othered” in both Israeli and Palestinian literature, the women in these novels emerge as new voices advocating for a recognition of the uniqueness of the woman's experience. By resisting the dominant literary narrative about women's role in society and in conflict, Grossman and Khalifeh's novels create alternative voices that empower women and suggest that the larger conflict is enmeshed in individual, familial, and societal conflicts.
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