

The Representation of War Trauma on Palestinian Families in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

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Araştırma Makalesi

DOI: 10.31592/aeusb.ed.1572653

Geliş Tarihi: 23.10.2024

Revize Tarihi: 11.12.2024

Kabul Tarihi:03.01.2025

Atf Bilgisi

Güven, S. (2025). The representation of war trauma on Palestinian families in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 11(Özel Sayı), 135-149.

ABSTRACT

Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* describes the war trauma experienced by Palestinian families. The novel deals with individual histories by focusing on historical events, and it depicts how trauma is inherited and transformed from one generation to another as time flows. The effect of war trauma shows itself in a variety of ways, such as physical and mental health problems, disordered family dynamics, and the attempt to maintain cultural identity despite external factors. In other words, Abulhawa's work discovers the intergenerational effects of conflict, displacement, and loss on Palestinian societies and offers a distressing depiction of how war extends into every aspect of life. This study examines the psychological, emotional, and cultural consequences of trauma experienced by characters, especially women and children, in terms of continuing political violence. It also analyzes the novels' narrative techniques, character development, and thematic concerns, and examines how Abulhawa expresses the lasting legacy of trauma, resilience, and the search for identity in the face of seemingly undefeatable harsh conditions. Moreover, Abulhawa benefits from the perception of exile to find out the psychological dimensions of war trauma since the characters' displacement from their hometown produces a deep sense of displacement and alienation, which increases their trauma. From this perspective, the study aims to demonstrate how Abulhawa illuminates the complexities of war trauma of Palestinian families by highlighting the resilience, dignity, and enduring hope of those who live through it in her *Mornings in Jenin*.

Keywords: Palestinian, trauma, displacement, war, violence.

Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar* Adlı Romanındaki Savaş Travmasının Filistinli Aileler Üzerindeki Yansıması

ÖZ

Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar* adlı eseri, Filistinli ailelerin yaşadığı savaş travmasını anlatmaktadır. Roman, bireysel hikayelere odaklanarak tarihi olayları ele alır ve travmanın zaman içinde nesilden nesile nasıl aktarıldığını ve dönüştüğünü tasvir eder. Savaş travmasının etkileri, fiziksel ve ruhsal sağlık sorunları, bozulmuş aile dinamikleri ve dış etkenlere rağmen kültürel kimliği sürdürme çabası gibi çeşitli şekillerde kendini gösterir. Diğer bir deyişle, Abulhawa'nın eseri, çatışma, yerinden edilme ve kaybın Filistin toplulukları üzerindeki kuşaklar arası etkilerini anlatır ve savaşın yaşamın her yönüne nasıl yayıldığını iç burkan bir şekilde gözler önüne serer. Bu çalışma, özellikle kadınlar ve çocuklar üzerinden karakterlerin yaşadığı travmanın psikolojik, duygusal ve kültürel sonuçlarını, devam eden siyasi şiddet bağlamında incelemektedir. Ayrıca, romanın anlatı tekniklerini, karakter gelişimini ve tematik kaygılarını analiz ederek, Abulhawa'nın travmanın kalıcı etkilerini, direnci ve kimlik arayışını, yenilmesi neredeyse imkânsız görünen zor koşullar karşısında nasıl ifade ettiğini tartışır. Bunun yanı sıra, Abulhawa, sürgün olma algısından yararlanarak savaş travmasının psikolojik boyutlarını keşfeder; çünkü karakterlerin memleketlerinden zorla uzaklaştırılması, onların derin bir yerinden edilmişlik ve yabancılaşma duygusu yaşamasına yol açar ve bu da travmalarını artırır. Bu perspektiften bakıldığında, çalışmanın amacı, Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar* eserinde savaş travmasının karmaşıklıklarını, bu travmayı yaşayanların gösterdiği direnç, onur ve bitmeyen umutla nasıl aydınlatıldığını göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistinli, travma, yerinden etme, savaş, şiddet.

Introduction

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian-American novelist, poet, and human rights activist known for narrating the Palestinian experience and the Middle Eastern socio-political landscape. Abulhawa, like many of her predecessors, has taken it upon herself to "bear witness to an unspeakable past, something which dominant History has been bent on silencing" (Hamdi, 2011, p.23). Born in 1970 to Palestinian

refugee parents, Abulhawa's life experiences have deeply affected her writing style and allowed her to expertise in terms of displacement, loss, and resilience. Besides fiction, her novels are deeply interested in the ongoing struggles of the Palestinian people to emphasize their sufferings in front of the world.

Abulhawa's novels deal with complex portrayals of Palestinian sufferings by incorporating different contexts and historical periods. In this respect, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) investigates the lasting agony of the Nakba. At the same time, her second novel, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015), deepens this painful exploration by revealing the challenges of families, particularly women in Gaza. Likewise, her latest novel, *Against the Loveless World* (2020), presents a more personalized perspective since it discusses the experiences of a political woman exposed to exile and imprisonment. Each novel plays an important role in creating worldly awareness on the realities of Palestinian life. In other words, they illuminate the illegal invasion of Palestine by revealing the political dimension of the war. Among her novels which are about the war in Palestine, *Mornings in Jenin* reflects the complexities of identity and endurance in a more detailed way. This sophisticated novel proves Abulhawa's position as the voice of those people in Nakba since she expresses the unfair conditions of war, which leads to systematic trauma for the victims.

One of the most important characteristics of Abulhawa's novels is her ability to get the resilience of the human spirit. Her female characters are depicted with a deep analysis that goes beyond the stereotypes and enables a complicated understanding of Palestinian identity. These women are not merely victims of their harsh conditions, in that, they are active actors who fight with courage and determination against the injustices they are exposed to. Through their unjust stories, the author touches upon the themes of powerful resistance, survival, and the enduring power of hope. Moreover, the way she uses language creates vivid descriptions of place and emotion. In this way, she draws readers into her characters' world. This is the reason why her novels have been widely recognized and praised throughout the world. Furthermore, Abulhawa presents a counter-narrative to often politicized depictions of the Palestinian struggle with her representations of life in refugee camps, the harsh realities of occupation, and the persistent longing for a lost homeland. However, Abulhawa's descriptions of the continuity of life during destruction pinpoint a theme of resilience that pervades the novel. Despite the devastating effects of war and displacement, her characters find ways to highlight their humanity and preserve cultural and familial ties. No matter how devastating it can be, Abulhawa shows how trauma can also be a source of strength that encourages acts of resistance and survival through her stories.

War trauma deeply impacts individuals and communities by leaving enduring scars that transcend generations. Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* centers around the experiences of Palestinian families after war, displacement, and loss. In *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa reports the journey of the Abulheja family across four generations, which began with the Nakba in 1948 when “[t]he British left Palestine and Jewish refugees who had been pouring in proclaimed themselves a Jewish state, changing the name of the land from Palestine to Israel” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.22). As a result, the Palestinians begin to suffer trauma because Israeli soldiers invade the village of Ein Hod. In this context, the novel examines how the loss of home, the fragmentation of family, and the relentless violence in refugee camps contribute to a collective and individual sense of trauma. Abulhawa presents a more intimate portrayal of the emotional and psychological wounds inflicted by war by focusing on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the struggle for survival through her trauma novels which are described as follows:

The trauma novel provides a picture of the individual that suffers but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an "everyperson" figure. Indeed, a significant purpose of the protagonist is often to reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender, have collectively experienced massive trauma (Balaev, 2008, p.155).

Abulhawa's use of setting plays a crucial role in her depiction of trauma. As portrayed in the novels, the landscapes of Jenin and Gaza are not just physical locations but are filled with symbolic

significance. They represent the continuity and burst of Palestinian life, which serve as sites of memory, loss, and resistance. In *Mornings in Jenin*, the village of Ein Hod, from which the Abulheja family is expelled, becomes a powerful symbol of the homeland. The refugee camp in Jenin, where the family seeks refuge, embodies the gap between displacement and the hope of return. She explains why she decides to choose Jenin as her setting in her notes at the end of the novel with the following words: “The horrors I witnessed there gave me the urgency to tell this story. The steadfastness, courage, and humanity of the people of Jenin were my inspiration” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.251). The setting is connected to the characters' experiences and emotional landscapes, which reflect the deep connection between place, memory, and identity. Abulhawa's exploration of the psychological impact of war on children provides some clues on the long-term consequences of conflict. Amal, who grows up in the shadow of war, exemplifies the deep scars left on those who experience violence from a young age. The children, shaped by their violent circumstances, demonstrate how trauma can distort childhood and influence the formation of identity. The other important point of Abulhawa's novel is her depiction of the resilience of Palestinian women. As a matter of fact, the novel portrays women as keepers of memory and bearers of cultural and familial permanence. The female characters perform extraordinary strength and determination despite great loss and trauma. Their stories emphasize the position of women in enduring the erasure of their past, and they are regarded as a bridge for the next generations to show their respect in the novel.

As a result, this study will reveal how Abulhawa's depiction of trauma is both universal and specifically Palestinian. On the one hand, her characters' fights with loss, displacement, identity, and painful experiences are shared by various societies around the world that have already suffered from war and exile. On the other hand, the unique cultural and historical context of the Palestinian experience makes these stories distinctive to emphasize the grim realities of war trauma and suffering. From this perspective, the article aims to demonstrate how Abulhawa reveals the traumatic conflict on Palestinian families to increase awareness of the hazardous cost of war in her *Mornings in Jenin*.

Method

Trauma Theory

Trauma, as a concept and a lived experience, has long been a subject of literary exploration. However, its emergence as a literary theory marks a significant development in understanding how literature reflects, represents, and influences the experiences of trauma. Trauma theory in literature draws from various disciplines, including psychology, history, and cultural studies, to analyze how traumatic experiences are depicted and understood in literary texts. The term “trauma” itself originates from the Greek word for “wound,” and in the psychological sense, it refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.

Shoshana Felman (2002) states, "the twentieth century can be defined as a century of trauma" (p.171). Concerning this, trauma theory explores the profound impact of traumatic experiences on individuals and societies by emphasizing how these experiences are represented, processed, and understood in literature, especially in the contemporary era. Cathy Caruth has highlighted how literature is a crucial medium for expressing and processing trauma, which allows for personal and collective testimonies. She defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of a sudden or catastrophic event” (Caruth, 1996, p.11), which leads to the constant emergence of hallucinations. Trauma theory sheds light on the limitations and possibilities of narration in transmitting the essence of trauma by focusing on how characters and their stories deal with devastating experiences.

A fundamental concept in trauma theory is the notion of testimony and bearing witness, in that, literature functions as a space in which traumatic experiences are described. This side of trauma theory stresses the role of literature in forming a mutual space for empathy as readers are also involved in the disordered realities of traumatized characters. According to Ruth Lens (2000), victims of trauma are “unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, s/he is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories” (p.2). Trauma theory discloses how stories act

as a medium for people to understand the sufferings of individuals via literary testimonies. For this reason, witnessing becomes an indispensable part of therapy and the formation of collective memory.

Furthermore, trauma theory examines how trauma affects identity and memory by revealing the profound impact of traumatic events on both individual and collective identities. From this perspective, literature often portrays the disintegration and reconstruction of identity as characters navigate after trauma. Memory plays a crucial role in this process through the characters who grapple with reconstructing their pasts and the implications for their current condition. Ernst Van Alphen (1998) asserts, "[w]hereas a memory is clearly distinct from the event being remembered – it is the memory of something – in the case of trauma, reality, and representation are inseparable" (p.36). Trauma theory, therefore, offers a framework for understanding how literature engages with the interplay between memory, identity, and the enduring effects of trauma by contributing to a detailed comprehension of the human experience.

Trauma theory also interrogates the role of language and narrative structure in representing trauma which is known as a "sudden, unexpected, overwhelming emotional blow or a series of blows that assault the person from outside" (Terr, 1990, p.8). The difficulty of articulating traumatic experiences often leads to fragmented, disjointed, or non-linear narration in literature. This narrative fragmentation mirrors the disruption caused by trauma by reflecting how traumatic memories can be fragmented and obscure. As a matter of fact, traumatized people often exceed the limits of verbal expression, which leads to fragmented, nonlinear, or incomplete representations in literature. This notion of unrepresentability highlights the inherent challenges in depicting trauma and how literature faces these challenges. Trauma theory reveals the complex interplay between trauma and narrative form, emphasizing the struggle to articulate experiences that resist coherent representation by exploring silences, gaps, and repetitions within texts.

Trauma is a personal experience that can reflect wider historical and cultural narratives. Literature is associated with this collective dimension by depicting the impact of social events such as wars, genocides, or systemic oppression on individuals and communities. This relates to sovereign power in direct contact with the subject's body. It marks, tortures, and shatters the body apart to make individuals aware of its existence. Therefore, sovereign power "produces and is itself produced by trauma: it provokes wars, genocides, and famines" (Edkins, 2003, p.xv). Trauma theory, therefore, provides a picture for understanding how literature reflects and comments on historical and cultural traumas by offering a means for societies to confront and process their collective pasts. This perspective also highlights how literary texts can serve as sites for social and political analysis by addressing justice, memory, and reconciliation issues. War trauma leaves profound and often long-lasting effects on those who experience it since it extends far beyond the battlefield. The psychological and emotional scars can appear in numerous ways, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Individuals who have been in war zones often relive their traumatic experiences through flashbacks and nightmares, which can disrupt their daily lives and relationships. Judith Herman (1997) pinpoints in her *Trauma and Recovery*:

Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship [...] When trust is lost, traumatized people feel they belong more to the dead than to the living (p.52).

These challenges are personal and social, as they influence family dynamics and community interactions. The impact of war trauma also extends to the families of those who have served. Beloved ones may struggle to understand the changes in behavior, and this leads to feelings of isolation and frustration. Children, in particular, can be deeply affected by a parent's trauma. This can lead to a cycle of trauma, where the stress and anxiety experienced by the older ones are indirectly passed down to the next generation. The basic family unit, regarded as a source of stability and support, can turn into fracture under the weight of unaddressed collective war trauma, which can be described as "a blow to

the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (Erikson, 1976, p.154).

Trauma theory also discusses the idea of “wounded” or “survivor” identities, which is essential to comprehend in what way people direct their post-traumatic lives. Literature depicts characters struggling with their sense of self after trauma and discovers the profound effect on their identities. These narratives can show how trauma disorders a person's sense of normality and leads to a reformation of new social identities. This may reveal how trauma reforms individuals' insights into their relationships with others and their own inner sides. By focusing on these wounded identities, trauma theory underlines the complexities of living with trauma and the ongoing struggle to find meaning in one's life. Concerning this, Cathy Caruth (1996) states that “the survival of trauma is not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event, a passage that is accidentally interrupted by reminders of it, but rather the endless inherent necessity of repetition” (p.62). Moreover, the effects of war trauma are not confined to the immediate conflict. They can persist for decades by influencing those directly involved in the fighting and future generations. For this reason, intergenerational trauma is a hazardous circumstance since the children and even grandchildren of war survivors may experience psychological difficulties related to the unresolved trauma of their ancestors.

Thus, trauma theory presents a significant point for understanding the deep and enduring impacts of war on individuals, families, and societies. It highlights the complex ways in which the past interferes with the present by examining how war trauma disrupts the psyche and shatters identities. It also emphasizes the importance of addressing both the psychological scars of the sufferers and the lasting social results of the whole community. In this way, trauma theory not only enables the opportunity to draw vivid pictures of war but also presents some solutions to rebuild peaceful lives, especially for the Palestinians.

Research Ethics

Ethical Approval is not required for this study.

Findings

The Realities of Palestinian Victimhood in *Mornings in Jenin*

Mornings in Jenin was first published in 2006 under the title "The Scar of David" and later republished with its current title in 2010. This novel is commonly known for its influential description of the Palestinian experience, mostly through the eyes of the Abulhejas family over several generations. The novel revolves around this family whose lives are shattered by the foundation of Israel in 1948. As they are taken from their land and transported to the Jenin refugee camp by force, the story continues across four generations and reveals the lasting impact of loss, identity, and survival on each member of the family. Susan Abulhawa becomes the voice of numerous silenced Palestinians who are exposed to violent and dehumanizing attitudes by Israeli forces.

The novel is about Amal, who has faced the difficult realities of the refugee camp since childhood. Her life reveals the Palestinian struggle as she directs the struggle of displacement, identity search, and the trauma of a dispatched family. The writer takes the readers on a journey to discover the emotional scars of victims through Amal's eyes. The novel begins with the displacement of the Abulheja family from their village of Ein Hod, which is violently taken over by Israeli forces. This initial displacement marks the beginning of a series of traumatic events that will follow the family through generations. Abulhawa vividly portrays the emotional and psychological toll of this upheaval. The characters grapple with losing their homeland, homes, and loved ones, setting the stage for a deep exploration of how these experiences change their lives and identities. Thus, they suffer from the severe effects of trauma which is known as “any event that leads the individual who experiences it to feel weak and defenseless” (Alayarian, 2011, p.62). From this angle, the novel offers a clear depiction

of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and serves as a bridge on the universal themes of love, justice, and dignity.

The psychological scars left by the initial displacement are vividly portrayed through the experiences of the novel's characters, as in the case of *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. Amal, the protagonist, embodies the generational trauma that follows the Abulheja family from one conflict to the next. The first traumatic event in Amal's life goes back to her childhood when she was only twelve years old and the Six-Day War (El-Naksa) took place. Amal and her friend Huda are asked by Dalia to take refuge in an underground kitchen hole to escape the Israeli bombings. They can hear "the expulsion and the panic above", (Abulhawa, 2010, p.68). Her life is a constant struggle between her inherited trauma and her longing for personal and political resolution. Her personal suffering is related to the collective grief of her family by highlighting how trauma extends beyond individual experiences to affect familial and cultural dynamics. The violent events Amal witnessed "overwhelm consciousness' ability to capture it in its entirety" (Caruth, 1996, p.4). The narrative portrays how the constant threat of violence, coupled with the dislocation from their homeland, leads to profound emotional disturbances. This portrayal underscores the novel's exploration of how trauma disrupts individual lives, familial relationships, and cultural continuity. In other words, the novel illustrates how the effects of war trauma extend beyond the individual. The frequent depiction of suffering, loss, and violence creates a sense of pervasive instability and insecurity. This emotional landscape is characterized by grief, fear, and a longing for justice.

Moreover, *Mornings in Jenin* explores the theme of intergenerational trauma by demonstrating how the effects of war and displacement are transmitted from one generation to the next in Palestinian families. Michelle Balaev (2012) states that traumatic experiences are "repetitious, timeless, and unspeakable" (p.151). This means that the effects of war and displacement are not confined to the individuals who experience them directly but are passed down to subsequent generations since the novel tells the history of the sufferings of four generations of an ordinary Palestinian family struggling to survive under the Palestine-Israeli conflict that lasted for more than 60 years. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated through the lives of the Abulheja family's descendants, who inherit the psychological burdens of their families. Abulhawa's narrative demonstrates how trauma becomes embedded in familial and cultural memory. The younger generation, including Amal's children, carries the weight of their ancestors' suffering. Abulhawa states that "forty generations of living, now stolen (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 35). She prefers to highlight the problem of Palestinians who "were slowly being erased from the world" (Abulhawa, 2010, pp.48-49). This generational transmission of trauma highlights the enduring nature of conflict and its capacity to shape identities and relationships.

Mornings in Jenin is also an indication of the resilience and resistance of the Palestinian people despite the overwhelming existence of trauma. While deeply affected by their experiences, the characters perform remarkable strength and determination as "the traumatic loss of homeland strengthens the connections of refugees" (Abulhawa, 2010, p.50). Their stories of resistance against oppression and their efforts to maintain their cultural identity offer a counter-narrative to the despair. Abulhawa presents resilience as a form of resistance, where preserving cultural practices, familial bonds, and personal dignity becomes a means of defying the forces of displacement and violence. The novel's portrayal of these themes underlines the capacity of individuals and communities to endure and resist. This depiction of resistance emphasizes the resilience and determination of the Palestinian people to assert their identity and rights despite the oppressive circumstances they face. Furthermore, the characters' acts of defiance and their efforts to preserve their cultural heritage and personal dignity are central to their resilience. For example, Yousef left his sister to be part of the Palestinian army, although he is the only remaining member of his family. Before his departure in 1968, he wrote a touching letter to Amal in which he says:

It is unbearable to think of our future as nullified, condemned to an eternal refugee's life of subjugation and shackles. The resistance is forming and eventually we will take back what is rightfully ours. You were born a refugee, but I promise I will die, if I must, so you do not die a refugee (Abulhawa, 2010, p.120).

Yousef wants to take revenge on those who killed his family, and therefore, he must sacrifice himself and become “Jenin’s own Fedayee” (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 122). Despite the dehumanizing effects of conflict and displacement, the characters’ resistance to losing their sense of self and their agency reflects their struggle to reclaim their humanity. Abulhawa’s portrayal of these acts of resistance features the importance of maintaining one’s identity. Additionally, memory and silence are crucial themes in Abulhawa’s novel since they reflect key concepts in trauma theory. The fragmented and often silenced nature of traumatic memories is depicted through the character's internal struggles and their interactions with one another. Trauma theory emphasizes that traumatic memories defy coherent narration and are marked by silence or distortion. *Mornings in Jenin* demonstrates this through the characters' efforts to reconcile their personal experiences. The novel portrays the difficulty of articulating trauma and how individuals and communities cope with the burden of unspoken pain. The silence surrounding traumatic experiences, coupled with the struggle to communicate and memorialize these experiences, underlines the profound impact of trauma. To illustrate, Amal expresses the death of his husband, Majid, with painful memories:

The children we would have, the places we would go, the home we would build, the laughter we’d share and the songs we’d sing, the life we’d live, the love . . . oh the love we would love, danced like ring-around-the-rosy, around the reality that Majid was dead. Killed. Ashes, ashes, all fall down (Abulhawa, 2010, pp.175-176).

All her dreams for the future are forever buried with her husband. Furthermore, the novel portrays how traumatic memories are fragmented and difficult to articulate. The traumatized person tries to resist remembering and prefers silence because he cannot find words to describe his fatal experience. Painful memories haunt his life, and he cannot survive normally because these memories still exist in his mind. Characters in this novel frequently confront the challenge of processing and expressing their pain, which is compounded by the cultural and political context of ongoing conflict. Therefore, Amal “wanted to be an American. I wanted to pack away my baggage of past and tragedy” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.186) to forget her painful memories. The silences and gaps in her narratives also reflect the pervasive nature of trauma, where certain experiences remain unspoken or distorted. This portrayal presents how trauma disrupts the ability to create coherent narratives by leaving individuals and communities struggling to make sense of their past and its impact on their present and future.

The novel also explores the theme of hope and the possibility of redemption in the cycle of trauma. Abulhawa provides glimpses of hope and healing potential despite the whole suffering. The resilience demonstrated by the Abulheja family members, their efforts to rebuild their lives, and their continued resistance against oppression reflect a profound sense of hope and determination. The characters' dreams and aspirations further develop the theme of hope and resilience. Even the characters' names show the possible hope of Palestinians, as in Amal's case. Her father explains to her why he gave her this name with the following words: “We named you Amal with a long vowel because the short vowel means just one hope, one wish, my father had once said. You are so much more than that” (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 72). Despite the pervasive challenges, the characters continue to hold onto their dreams of a better future. Abulhawa portrays their aspirations as a driving force that motivates them to persevere and seek change. This theme underscores the idea that there is a possibility for renewal.

Abulhawa’s depiction of the role of women in the novel provides a lens through which to explore gender dynamics within the context of conflict. The experiences of female characters such as Amal reveal how women resist the personal and social challenges imposed by conflict, like Nahr in her *Against the Loveless World*. For Amal in this novel, the horror she witnessed in the 1967 war enabled her to be a strong woman, but she looked like her mother, who would tell her every time she had trouble that “whatever you feel, keep it inside” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.39). This affects Amal’s character and makes her thoughts like an adult. The mother has no feelings for her daughter, who needs emotion. The trauma she suffered as a child makes her adulthood powerful, but she has no particular care for her child. From this perspective, the novel portrays women not only as victims of

war but also as active agents of resistance and leadership within their communities since they “were seen as vital in passing on Palestinian traditions and instilling political consciousness” (Sherwell, 1996, p.295). They were expected to give birth to more Palestinians to increase the number of future fighters for their nation. Their stories reflect the struggles of Palestinian women who bear the burden of domestic and political turmoil. Abulhawa emphasizes the critical role of women in both the survival and resistance narratives within conflict zones by explaining their experiences.

The representation of trauma is closely tied to the experience of displacement and loss by reflecting trauma theory's emphasis on how such experiences can lead to profound psychological impacts. This emotional displacement is marked by a persistent sense of alienation, not only from their homeland but also from their own sense of self. The characters face a fractured identity, as conflict and displacement continually disrupt their sense of belonging and continuity. Abulhawa vividly depicts the personal and collective upheaval caused by the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their homes. The author states how they are affected by the war they experience: “[W]ar changed us, mama, most of all. It withered Mama” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.86). Amal also expresses the trauma of Dalia (her mother) after the death of her son with the following words:

Following the occupation and the loss of my brother and father, Mama hardly left the prayer mat. She had no desire for food and refused even the paltry ration that arrived on the charity truck. The cotton of her gown grew dark with the stench of her sunbathed body, and her breath soured (86).

This detachment also affects her relationship with her daughter Amal, born in the camp. As a mother, she fails to establish a secure bond with Amal or express her love except during the child's sleep. Dalia's quiet detachment can be interpreted as a “reaction to the loss of a loved one or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, and ideal, and so on” (Freud, 1957, p.243). Additionally, this indifference is not merely a change of location but an upheaval that affects every aspect of the characters' lives. Trauma theory highlights how such dislocations disrupt a person's sense of place and identity by leading to a persistent sense of alienation. The novel's portrayal of characters struggling to reconstruct their lives in refugee camps and in exile stresses how displacement fragments their community.

Additionally, the novel's portrayal of the refugee camps, particularly Jenin, as both a physical and symbolic space, plays an important role. The novel describes these camps as follows: ‘One square mile, where the United Nations subsidizes forty-five thousand residents, four generations of refugees, lived, vertically packed’ (Abulhawa, 2010, p.225). The camps are depicted as sites of physical displacement and resistance due to the Israeli attack in 2002. However, Abulhawa illustrates how these camps become centers of community solidarity and resilience. Abulhawa's main purpose while writing the novel is to show the miserable conditions of Palestinian people who unexpectedly became homeless. The difficulties of their lives in the refugee camps are expressed as follows: “If we must be refugees, we will not live like dogs” (2010, p. 49). The depiction of life in the camps reflects the complex interplay between survival, resistance, and the search for dignity in the face of ongoing war. By highlighting these conditions, Abulhawa draws attention to the systemic neglect and marginalization faced by refugees.

Abulhawa's novel also explores the role of trauma in shaping identity and belonging. Trauma theory suggests that traumatic experiences can deeply impact an individual's sense of identity and their connection to a larger community. Throughout *Mornings in Jenin*, the characters fight with questions of identity and belonging in addition to displacement. For example, Sara tells her mother she wants to learn her roots: “Mom, I'm going to Palestine. I want you to come too. [...] I want to know who I am” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.281), Sara said. This shows the novel explores how the loss of homeland and cultural heritage affects the characters' connections to their roots. Their struggle for identity is portrayed as a personal and collective journey by reflecting Palestinians' challenge in maintaining their cultural and national identity. For the functions of collective trauma, Shnabel and Nadler (2008) state that “[c]ollective trauma may threaten collective identity; it may raise questions

about the significance of the group, and about core belief systems for both victims and perpetrators” (p.118). The novel illustrates how the Abu Raya family's trauma from displacement and conflict leads to a detailed questioning of their identity and sense of belonging. The characters deal with their displaced status and the loss of their homeland. To illustrate, Amal struggles with her search for belonging in the upheaval of her family's experiences. This exploration underscores how trauma can lead to a re-establishment of personal and collective identity. Moreover, the trauma of war distorts the identity of Ismael as well. The kidnapped son Ismael becomes a Jewish man, David, who fights against the people from his original homeland. This is clear in Amal's first meeting with him. She called him David since “he had not been Ismael for fifty-three years” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.163). That means, it has been fifty-three years since Ismael became a “Jew” with the name David, and it also marks that Israel's occupation of Palestine is also fifty-three years.

Besides, the novel highlights how Palestinians living in the nostalgia maintain their connection to their homeland and contribute to the struggle for justice. This means that “memory and identity are connected: Both are bound to historical contexts and have to be seen as constructions” (Hammer, 2005, p.40). Characters forced to leave their homeland continue to deal with their sense of belonging and the responsibility to support their people back home. Abulhawa effectively portrays how nostalgia bridges the displaced and their homeland by facilitating cultural and political engagement continuity despite geographical separation. In addition to the diaspora, Abulhawa uses the homecoming motif to explore themes of belonging and identity. As characters strive to return to their homeland or rebuild their lives, home symbolizes lost dreams and unattainable goals. The novel's portrayal of homecoming is combined with both hope and despair. To illustrate, Yehya Abulheja's return to Ein Hod symbolizes all Palestinians' wish to return to their country. To set the irony here, Abulhawa introduces the imagery of peace against that of death: “When the family cleaned Yehya's body for burial, they found three olives and some figs in his pockets” (Abulhawa,2010, p. 48). Those olives and figs are put in front of the powerful ammunition of the Israeli army, which kills him. His death is associated with the land loss of Palestinians. These motifs highlight the emotional weight of displacement.

Structurally, the novel's use of symbolism and imagery contributes to exploring its themes. For instance, Abulhawa uses the imagery of the olive tree, a symbol of peace and endurance, to represent the resilience of the Palestinian people. It is stated in the novel that “[t]he sons worked on opposite sides of each tree as their mothers trailed them, hauling away blankets of fresh olives to be pressed later that day” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.4). This symbolism emphasizes the deep connection between the people and their land and their hope for peace. The repetitive use of such symbols enriches the plot. Besides, the narrative structure mirrors the fragmented nature of traumatic memory in *Mornings in Jenin*. Trauma theory discusses how trauma disrupts linear narratives and leads to non-linear memories. Abulhawa's shifting perspectives and fragmented timelines reflect the characters' disordered experiences and memories. The novel's non-chronological events allow readers to experience the chaos of trauma together with the characters.

Abulhawa investigates the role of communal and familial bonds in the context of trauma. The relationships among the members of families play a crucial role in their ability to endure and process their trauma in *Mornings in Jenin*. The novel depicts the strength of familial ties as the Abu Raya family directs their collective sufferings. The characters' interactions reveal how trauma can unite and divide families. To exemplify, Amal attempts to reconcile the trauma of psychological by reuniting with her long-lost Israeli brother David (Ismael) to find his identity. Rhetorically, Ismael's kidnapping is a metaphor for land kidnapping. The change of his name from Arabic to Jewish also represents the real situation in the streets and cities of Palestine. When David asks Amal if she still regards him as “abstract”, she thinks silently: “No...You and I are the remains of an unfulfilled legacy, heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities” (Abulhawa, 2010, p.270). David asks Amal and her daughter Sara to accompany him back to the Middle East. He is tormented by “that ache of not belonging and the shakiness of an inverted identity” (p.283). During Amal's visit to Jenin in 2002, which was her final journey there, she ended her life. She tries to protect her daughter Sara from Israeli soldiers' shooting, and she feels pity for her killer at the end of the novel: “Sad for the boy bound to the killer. I am sad

for the youth betrayed by their leaders for symbols and flags and war and power” (pp.305-306) These dynamics illustrate how trauma can reinforce connections within families to resist against the unfair war.

Finally, *Mornings in Jenin* contributes to the discourse on human rights and social justice by providing a detailed portrayal of the Palestinian war. Abulhawa's work encourages readers to reflect on the systemic injustices imposed on Palestinians. The novel's examination of themes such as justice, resistance, and cultural preservation serves as a call to action for greater awareness in addressing the humanitarian and political challenges. In this way, the novel presents a deep and multidimensional exploration of war trauma, displacement, and resistance. Shortly, it delivers a comprehensive understanding of the Palestinian sufferings by examining personal and collective identity, gender dynamics, symbolism, loss, and call for human rights to stop unjust war.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

The Israeli-Palestinian wars, which are described through the unpromising landmarks of 1948, 1967, and, more currently, 2024, are wars with unpredictable outcomes on the lives of the characters and on the Palestinian society. From this perspective, *Mornings in Jenin* dramatizes the eternal expulsion of Palestinians after the Jewish invasion of the Middle East in 1947. The novel makes sense because of its intimate portrayal of various mental, social, and cultural deprivations that paralyzed the Palestinian community for years and left a collective trauma on all of them. Obviously, it was the massacre in Jenin in 2002 that inspired Abulhawa to write the novel. The writer was a witness to these tragic events. She sympathized with the people of her motherland and expressed her feelings through literary works. The whole novel fully embodies the themes of war, deprivation, trauma, nostalgia, and dislocation. In addition, the Palestinians' lifestyle, culture, and traditions are the key elements of this plot. Abulhawa also successfully portrayed the suffering and trauma of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

The depiction of multigenerational trauma in *Mornings in Jenin* is evidence of the detrimental effects of displacement and violence. The novel's structure, spanning decades and generations, demonstrates how trauma is transmitted and spread within families. This way of narration emphasized the resisting nature of clashes and the continuous challenge for the healing process. The characters' challenges to recover their lost identity and past are symbols of the Palestinian longing for permanent peace. Besides, the displacement and dispersal of family units cause important changes in the affairs among family members. The novel discovers how the unbearable trauma of leaving their homeland badly affects the family members. Abulhawa reflects the scattering of family institutions due to external factors such as lack of confidence, internal disagreements, displacement, and violence. The characters' struggle to come together again and support each other during the ongoing war proves the importance of solidarity among the family members.

Abulhawa's novel also deals with memory as a key element of the search for identity. Remembering previous experiences becomes vital to reforming and comprehending one's identity. Their memories, which include loss, resilience, and displacement, play an important role in identifying themselves. Abulhawa's emphasis on memory as a medium for identity formation features the significance of informing past sufferings to show consistent personal development. Moreover, Abulhawa's novels touch upon the theme of hope in the search for identity. The characters' determination to protect cultural heritage and establish a better future emphasizes the prospective hope for development. The novelist's focus on hope and reestablishment compensates for the depiction of trauma since it suggests that the search for identity is limited to suffering and the probability of positive improvements for the next generations.

Besides, Abulhawa's discussion on family dynamics is also important in terms of progress. The experiences of younger and older generations clash in complicated ways, which show different aspects of the past and future. For example, the younger generation's attempt to resolve their transmitted trauma with their hopes leads to tensions with the older ones, who may have contradictory

ideas on how to cope with the mutual past. The novelist employs the symbol of home to stress the concept of survival and adjustment into a family unit since “[h]ome is a place geographically situated and proximally close, yet uninhabitable, thereby creating perceptions of the self and world that feel at times discordant” (Balaev, 2012, p.100) for the characters. In this respect, the characters' adaptation to new conditions and support of each other against the exposure to displacement proves their strength and solidarity. Abulhawa's interpretation of these adaptations solidifies the significance of familial bonds in defeating the difficulties of war.

As a result, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* emphasizes the exploration of war trauma, irresistible sufferings, and the longing for peace in Palestine. Abulhawa reveals the destruction of Palestinian identity, and the deep sensitive scars caused by displacement, loss of families, and the inner struggles of individuals due to ongoing violence. She portrays the complex experiences by highlighting the significance of resistance against the Israeli forces throughout the novel by revealing the human cost of war that the people turn their eyes blind and their ears deaf in the world. Lastly, it should be kept in mind that “the forgotten genocide is repeated,” as Aliya Izetbegovic stated, and therefore, we as human beings should always call the authorities into duty to end this unfair war and remind them of the grim facts of genocide as Susan Abulhawa does in her novel.

The Contribution of Researchers

The contribution of the researcher to this study is 100%.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar (Mornings in Jenin)* adlı romanı, Filistin'deki savaşın ve İsrail-Filistin çatışmasının acımasız sonuçlarını konu almaktadır. Roman, bir Filistin ailesinin birkaç kuşak boyunca yaşadığı travmaların derinlemesine bir portresini sunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, savaşın bireyler ve aileler üzerindeki yıkıcı etkileri ayrıntılı bir şekilde işlenmektedir. Roman, özellikle Filistinli ailelerin yaşadığı zorunlu göç, kayıp, ölüm ve şiddetin psikolojik yansımalarını derinlemesine incelemektedir. Romanın merkezinde Abulheja ailesi yer alır ve onların 1948'den itibaren başlayan mültecilik süreci anlatılmaktadır. Yıkıcı savaşın ve işgalin getirdiği travmalar, ailenin her bir ferdini farklı şekillerde etkiler. Anne ve babalar, evlerini ve topraklarını kaybetmenin acısıyla mücadele ederken, çocuklar bu belirsizlik ortamında büyümek zorunda kalmaktadır. Bu durum, çocukların kimlikleri, aidiyetleri ve yaşamları üzerinde derin bir iz bırakırken nesiller boyu süren travmanın, savaşın bitmediği bir bölgede nasıl aktarıldığını göstermektedir.

Makale, bu ailevi ve bireysel travmanın temel unsurlarını ele alırken, aynı zamanda savaşın sadece fiziksel bir yıkım olmadığını, duygusal ve psikolojik boyutlarının da en az onun kadar derin olduğunu vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Abulhawa'nın karakterleri, sevdiklerini kaybetmenin, köksüz kalmanın ve sürekli bir güvensizlik içinde yaşamının acısını taşıırken, bu travmalar kuşaktan kuşağa aktarılır. Savaşın, aile yapısına nasıl zarar verdiği, aile içindeki rollerin değişimi ve bireylerin bu yeni düzene ayak uydurma çabaları romanda sıkça işlenen temalardır. Bu bağlamda makale, Abulhawa'nın karakterleri üzerinden savaşın travmatik etkilerinin Filistinli aileler üzerindeki yansımalarını detaylandırarak tartışır. Özellikle, travmanın sadece bireylerin ruh sağlığını değil, aynı zamanda aile içi ilişkileri ve toplumsal yapıları da derinden etkilediği üzerinde durulur. Abulhawa, savaşın ve işgalin sıradan insanların yaşamlarında yarattığı tahribatı gözler önüne sererken, okuyucuyu bu derin insani trajediye tanıklık etmeye yönlendirmektedir.

Yöntem

Bu makale, Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar* adlı romanında yer alan savaş travmalarının Filistinli aileler üzerindeki etkilerini analiz etmek amacıyla nitel bir edebi inceleme yöntemi kullanmaktadır. Makalenin temel yöntemi, metin temelli içerik analizi olup, romanın tematik yapıları, karakter gelişimi, sembolizm ve anlatı yapıları üzerinden savaş travmasının bireyler ve aileler üzerindeki yansımalarını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. İlk olarak, eserdeki temel karakterlerin yaşadığı travmatik olaylar metin içindeki pasajlar aracılığıyla analiz edilmiş ve bu olayların karakterlerin ruhsal durumları, aile içi ilişkileri ve toplumsal bağlamdaki yerlerine olan etkileri değerlendirilmiştir. İkinci aşamada, romanda yer alan travmatik olayların kuşaklar arası aktarım süreçleri ve bu aktarımın psikolojik ve sosyolojik etkileri üzerine derinlemesine bir çözümleme yapılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, literatürdeki travma kuramı kaynaklarından hareketle, savaşın bireyler ve aileler üzerindeki etkileri çok boyutlu bir yaklaşımla incelenmiştir. Özellikle Cathy Caruth'un travmanın dil yoluyla ifade edilme zorluğu ve savaş sonrası psikolojik etkiler üzerine yaptığı çalışmalar, Abulhawa'nın romanında karakterlerin travmatik deneyimlerinin anlatı yoluyla nasıl yansıtıldığına ışık tutmaktadır. Romanın tarihsel ve sosyo-politik bağlamı da makalenin yöntemi içinde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Filistin'in 20. yüzyıl boyunca yaşadığı zorunlu göç, işgal ve şiddet ortamı, karakterlerin yaşadığı travmaların anlaşılmasında kritik bir arka plan sağlamaktadır. Son olarak, bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemi doğrultusunda metin çözümlemesine dayalı bir yaklaşımla yürütülmüştür. Romanın belirli bölümleri, karakterlerin yaşadığı travmatik deneyimlerin yansıtılması ve bu deneyimlerin aile yapısına olan etkileri bakımından incelenerek, savaşın sadece bireysel düzeyde değil, ailevi ve toplumsal düzeyde de nasıl bir yıkıma yol açtığı travma teorisi kullanılarak tartışılmıştır.

Bulgular

Savaş, yalnızca fiziki yıkımlara neden olmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda bireylerin ve toplumların ruhsal yapısında derin yaralar açan bir olgudur. Özellikle İsrail-Filistin çatışması gibi uzun süredir devam eden ve geniş çapta bir nüfusu etkileyen savaşlar, nesiller boyu süren travmatik deneyimlere yol açmaktadır. Bu bağlamda edebiyat, savaşın yarattığı bireysel ve toplumsal travmaların anlaşılması ve aktarılması için önemli bir araç olarak öne çıkar. Filistinli yazar Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar (Mornings in Jenin)* adlı romanı, Filistin halkının maruz kaldığı savaşın ve çatışmanın, bireyler ve aileler üzerindeki etkilerini çarpıcı bir şekilde ele alır.

Roman, Filistin'de yaşanan zorunlu göç ve mülteciliğin aileler üzerindeki derin travmatik etkilerini çarpıcı bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır. 1948'de Nakba (Büyük Felaket) ile başlayan süreçte Abulheja ailesi, vatanlarını kaybetmek zorunda bırakılır ve bu travma, ailenin her bir bireyinin yaşamını geri dönülemez bir biçimde etkiler. Aile fertleri, köklerinden kopmanın yarattığı kimlik kaybı, aidiyetsizlik ve belirsizlik duygularıyla baş etmeye çalışırken, zorunlu göçün yarattığı psikolojik yük, kuşaklar boyunca aktarılır. Ebeveynler evlerini kaybetmenin ve mülteci statüsünde yaşamının acısını derinden hissederken, çocuklar bu acıların gölgesinde büyüyerek kendi kimlik ve aidiyet sorunlarıyla yüzleşmek zorunda kalır. Bu durum, kuşaktan kuşağa aktarılan bir travma döngüsüne yol açmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, roman boyunca savaşın ve işgalin, sadece bireylerin psikolojik durumlarını değil, aynı zamanda aile yapısını da bozduğu görülmektedir. Abulheja ailesi, sürekli olarak kayıp, ölüm ve şiddetle yüzleşmek zorunda kalır. Bu kayıplar, aile fertleri arasında derin bir duygusal mesafeye ve güven eksikliğine neden olur. Anne ve babalar, çocuklarını koruma güdüsüyle hareket ederken, aynı zamanda kendileri de savaşın getirdiği travmalarla başa çıkmaya çalışır. Bu süreçte, aile içi rollerin değişmesi, bireylerin travma ile baş etme biçimlerini ve ilişkilerini olumsuz etkiler. Özellikle ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkilerinde ortaya çıkan gerilimler, savaşın aile yapısına verdiği zararın en belirgin yansımalarından biridir.

Roman, savaş travmasının bir nesilden diğerine nasıl aktarıldığını derinlemesine işler. Abulheja ailesinin fertleri, savaşa ve işgale doğrudan tanıklık eden bireyler olarak, kendi travmatik deneyimlerini çocuklarına aktarır. Bu aktarım, hem bilinçli hem de bilinçdışı bir şekilde gerçekleşir. Ebeveynler, kendi travmalarını tam anlamıyla işleyemedikleri için çocuklarına da bu travmayı miras bırakır. Roman, özellikle Filistin toplumunda savaşın süregeldiği bir ortamda büyüyen çocukların, anne ve babalarının yaşadığı travmaların gölgesinde büyüdüğünü ve bu travmaların onların yaşamlarına nasıl nüfuz ettiğini gösterir. Romanın bir diğer önemli bulgusu, savaşın bireylerin kimlik ve aidiyet duyguları üzerindeki yıkıcı etkisidir. Abulheja ailesi, mülteci olarak yaşamaya zorlandıkları için kendilerini hem fiziksel hem de kültürel anlamda köksüz hissederek. Bu durum, ailenin genç üyelerinde belirgin bir kimlik bunalımına yol açar. Filistin'e, kültürlerine ve tarihsel miraslarına bağlı kalmaya çalışan karakterler, aynı zamanda savaşın ve işgalin yarattığı parçalanmışlık hissiyle mücadele eder. Kimliklerinin ve aidiyetlerinin sürekli tehdit altında olması, onların kendi iç dünyalarında derin bir çatışma yaşamasına neden olur. Son olarak Abulheja ailesi fertleri, savaşın ve işgalin getirdiği sürekli kaygı, korku ve güvensizlik içinde yaşamaktadır. Bu psikolojik yük, onların gündelik yaşamlarını ve sosyal ilişkilerini derinden etkiler. Roman, karakterlerin travmatik deneyimlerini psikolojik bir perspektiften ele alarak, savaşın insan ruhunda açtığı yaraları gözler önüne serer. Bu bağlamda, savaşın yalnızca bir zaman dilimiyle sınırlı olmadığını, bireylerin hayatlarını ve zihinlerini kalıcı olarak şekillendirdiğini gösterir.

Sonuç, Tartışma ve Öneriler

Susan Abulhawa'nın *Cenin'de Sabahlar* adlı romanı, Filistin'deki savaşın ve İsrail-Filistin çatışmasının, bireyler ve aileler üzerinde bıraktığı derin ve kalıcı travmatik etkileri edebi bir dille gözler önüne sermektedir. Roman, savaşın yalnızca fiziksel yıkımla sınırlı kalmadığını, aynı zamanda psikolojik, duygusal ve toplumsal boyutlarda da büyük tahribata neden olduğunu vurgular. Abulheja ailesi üzerinden işlenen bu travmatik süreç, kuşaklar arası bir boyut kazanarak, savaşın etkilerinin nesilden nesile nasıl aktarıldığını ortaya koyar. Aile yapısındaki bozulmalar, zorunlu göç, aidiyet ve

kimlik sorunları ile sürekli belirsizlik içinde yaşamın getirdiği psikolojik yükler, savaşın travmatik etkilerinin başlıca unsurları olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Abulhawa, karakterlerinin yaşadığı acılar ve kayıplar üzerinden, savaşın sıradan insanların yaşamlarında açtığı derin yaraları detaylandırarak, bu travmanın toplumsal ve kültürel yapıdaki yankılarını gözler önüne sermektedir. Sonuç olarak, *Cenin'de Sabahlar* romanı, savaşın sadece bir çatışma alanında değil, bireylerin zihinlerinde ve kalplerinde de sürdüğünü ve bu travmanın aile yapılarında, toplumsal ilişkilerde ve kişisel kimliklerde uzun vadeli etkiler yarattığını güçlü bir şekilde göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, savaşın bireyler üzerindeki yıkıcı etkilerini derinlemesine anlayabilmek adına, edebi anlatının ve travma kuramının sağladığı içgörülerle savaşın daha geniş ve çok boyutlu sonuçlarını ele almıştır.