

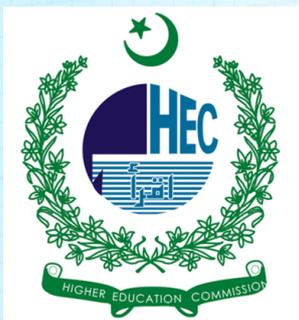
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**Uprooted from Roots: Narrative of Identity in Diaspora in Hala Aylan's  
*Salt Houses***



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**Abstract**

The issues of belonging and identity are the main focus of the postcolonial discourse, where the culture and subjectivity of the postcolonial world are still defined by the legacy of migration, colonialism, and displacement. This study aims to examine the narrativization of uprooted identity in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* in terms of diaspora. It scrutinizes the way the novel depicts the disintegration and bargaining of identity among the various generations of the Palestinian Yacoub family as they are displaced one after another by war, political upheaval, and migration. Based on the postcolonial theory within diaspora domain, complemented by Bhabha's conception of identity, the study highlights how *Salt Houses* reflects the conflict between the memory of the homeland and the adjustment to the new cultural settings, showing that identity is constantly redefined in exile. The themes of loss, nostalgia, intergenerational trauma, and the changing definition of home are analyzed as the characters find their place in transnational spaces. By critically examining the structure of the novel and the character lines, this study shows how *Salt Houses* expresses the intricate relationship between cultural origins and diasporic identity, and how uprooting ironically becomes the key to the characters developing new, hybrid identities. Findings of the study indicate that Alyan's selected novel does not only represent the lived experience of the Palestinian diaspora, but also adds to the wider discourses of diaspora, memory and identity reconstruction.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Identity, Displacement, Nostalgia, Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, Home, Uprooting, Intergenerational Trauma, Cultural Hybridity.

**Introduction**

The concept of diaspora has been the focus of the learning process of cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of displaced communities. Historically, diaspora is a Greek word, 'diaspeirein', which translates to disperse, and in its original meaning, diaspora was the forced migration of people out of their original places of residence. The term has since been used to include voluntary migration, exile and transnational movements thus reflecting the fluidity and hybridity of the modern identities (Ang, 2005). Fundamentally, diaspora represents the conflict between the desire to belong to a motherland and the need to adjust to new conditions, creating identities that are interchangeable, mixed, and usually fragmented. Diasporic condition is a common theme in modern literature that is used to demonstrate the effects of migration and exile on individuals and communities, their sense of self, memory, and belonging. Diaspora narratives do not only record the physical displacement but also explore the emotional and cultural displacement that ensues when individuals are displaced out of their social, cultural and historical backgrounds. "Diasporic Literature is written by authors who live outside their homeland". (Samuel & Pulizala, 2023, p. 136). It addresses intertwined themes of home, memory, and displacement in which the sense of homeland is both the real space and the re-created ideal within the context of exile. Instead, the hostland is a place of cultural contact and negotiation, where there is a possibility of new identities and where people are exposed to marginalization, alienation, and the loss of continuity of culture.

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*Salt Houses* by Alyan offers a very fruitful ground to explore the multifaceted mechanisms by which displaced communities make meaning, preserve cultural memory and negotiate the in-between worlds between homeland and host society. It provides a subtle insight into the diasporic experience, shedding light on the hardships as well as the strength of the communities that have been displaced due to their cultural and geographical backgrounds. It is a classic example of the Palestinian diasporic experience, like Yacoub family is shown to be struggling with various displacements across generations, dispersed across Beirut, Boston, London, Manhattan, and Vermont, representing a life shaped by continual movement. The novelist depicts interference with family structure, cultural continuity and identity caused by political instability, war, and forced migration. The Yacoub family face many wars such as Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Six-Day War in 1967, the Gulf War in 1991, and the Lebanese Civil War in 2006, causing repeated displacement of family. These wars and periods of political unrest cause the scattering of family members and displacement across generations, showing that first-generation migrants are not the only ones affected by the trauma and cultural memory of displacement, as their children and grandchildren also inherit this trauma and memory. The variety of homes in which the family lived during the decades of succession serve as the archives of the family memory, each of them representing its own past and emotional experiences. The situation of both characters can be theorized as a micro world of the larger human experience, and thus shed light on the complexities of uprootedness and diaspora. This intergenerational model focuses on the process of negotiating, reconstructing, and reconstituting identity during transnational migration. Moreover, the novel highlights the interaction of memory, nostalgia, and belonging through the comparison of the houses in Jaffa and Nablus by Salma's recollections. The former house is a memory that haunts her present and forms a complicated chronotope. It shows how the characters interact with their pasts and at the same time face the challenges of new cultural spaces. It demonstrates that identity in diaspora is never fixed or monolithic but instead, it is dynamic and is constantly being changed by the experience of loss, adaptation and cultural negotiation. Placing personal and collective histories within broader socio-political histories, Alyan (2017) prefigures the unavoidable connection between exile and identity formation, highlighting that the subjects of the diaspora are in a constant state of negotiation between the need to be rooted and the necessity to be mobile.

### **Literature Review**

Postcolonial theory is closely related to the study of the diaspora in that it explores the relationship between colonialism, displacement, identity, culture, and political consciousness of the diasporic communities. Colonial domination did not only redefine territorial borders but also created massive migrations, both forced and voluntary, which left people in a state of in-betweenness, balancing between the homeland and the hostland (Chariandy, 2006). Hybridity, ambivalence, and cultural negotiation are some of the concepts highlighted by postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Edward Said to understand the ways in which the diasporic subjects oppose the rigid ideas of identity imposed by both colonialities and nationalist discourses (Pal, 2024). In this context, Diaspora is a place of alternate discourses where the voices of the marginalized re-write history, disrupt Eurocentric discourses, and expose the continuing impacts of imperial authority in language,

memory, and identity (Tsagarousianou, 2007). In such a way, postcolonial theory perceives diaspora not only as migration, but as a place of critical cultural production, resistance, and re-articulation of identity in the globalized post-imperial world (Saraswati, 2021).

Diaspora is the term used to indicate the scattering of individuals out of their motherland and leads to the experiences of displacement, nostalgia, and negotiations of belonging in the foreign cultures. "Diaspora is the movement of indigenous people or a population of common people to a place other than their homeland region..." (Smith, 2014, p. 1). It is a geographic displacement, resulting in experiences of displacement, rootlessness, nostalgia, and memory in the host societies. Diaspora refers to dispersion peoples "who share common historical experiences of dispossession, displacement [rootlessness, and] adaptation" (Clifford, 1994, p. 309), passing through "experiences of displacement...while remaining rooted in specific, discrete histories" (Clifford, 1994, p. 302). Diasporic spaces offer "sites of hope and new beginnings" (Brah, 1992, p. 130), emphasizing the ambitious direction of migration despite its traumatic origins. The sense of uprootedness aggravate the diasporic condition, leading to crop up "sense of not being at home and even feeling strange and uncanny" (Brah, 1992, p.131). These experiences disturb identity because the diasporic subjects have to negotiate between the homelands they have lost and the new host societies resulting to the emergence of hybrid identities. (Qasim et al., 2024, p. 596).

*Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan is characterized by the evocative narration that effortlessly intertwines happiness and suffering and traces the lives of the Palestinian family of Yacoub through the generations. The review points out how Alyan manages to deal with complicated relationships and displacement with emotional nuance and narrative clarity. The family relationships and forced migration described in the novel make a strong impression on the readers (Publishers Weekly, 2017). Masad (2017) discusses *Salt Houses*, emphasizing that the novel represents the existence of a Palestinian family of middle-income people who have to deal with displacement, privilege, and intergenerational trauma. The reviewer emphasizes that Alyan manages to depict the tension between the social status, cultural identity, and forced migration. In general, Masad (2017) praises the subtle approach to loss and resilience in the fiction of Alyan. According to Inskip (2017), the treatment of idea of displacement by Alyan is based on intergenerational trauma and personal experience, thus, the emotional resonance of lost things and homes. The novel explains the discontinuous sense of belonging experienced by her characters, which represents larger concepts of identity and diaspora. Haddad (2019) argues that the multi-voiced, multi-perspective form of the novel is indicative of the fragmented and hybrid identities of Arab diasporic communities. It is a loss of place, intergenerational trauma, and cultural negotiation practiced by the families in exile, and it offers a literary space in which the collisions of memory, nostalgia, and belonging take place. Haddad (2019) shows how the polyphonic techniques are foregrounded in *Salt Houses* to break the linear narrative and stay true to the complexity of diaspora.

Although there is a preexisting literature on Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses*, focusing on the theme of displacement trauma and the refugee experience, the evidence-based gap is still noticeable regarding the negotiation of diasporic identity across generations, gender, and cultural lines. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the intergenerational and gendered narratives of identity within the context of the

Palestinian diaspora.

### **Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology**

Based on the postcolonial theory within diaspora domain, complemented by Bhabha's conception of identity, this study offers a qualitative, interpretive analysis of *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan, with emphasis on the construction of diasporic identity. The research uses literary analysis to explore some of the main textual aspects like character development, thematic motifs, and narrative structure to comprehend the influence of displacement and cultural heritage on identity. The study relies on hermeneutic and thematic reading approaches, which are complemented by the pertinent academic literature on the topics of diaspora, migration, and memory to offer a subtle understanding of how Alyan depicts the conflicts between roots, exile, and belonging.

The concept of postcolonialism was used by historians to analyze the socio-political realities of the post-decolonization period after World War II. Postcolonial was initially used to refer to the historical era immediately following decolonization, and it is more of a periodizing term than an ideological one. Postcolonial states were therefore those former colonial states that had gained independence. The concept also encompasses all cultures "affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Walder, 1998, p. 35). Postcolonial criticism examines "the social histories, cultural differences and political discrimination that are practised and normalised by colonial and imperial machineries" (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007, p. 1174). Tyson (1999) also adds that postcolonial criticism focuses on "the experiences and literary production of peoples whose history is characterized by extreme political, social and psychological oppression" (p. 5). In a wider sense, postcolonial theory examines the historical and current effects of colonialism on knowledge production and cultural discourse.

One of the main issues of postcolonial theory is the challenge to the fixed concept of identity, suggesting instead that identity is constantly being redefined in the process of cross-cultural interactions. The term hybridity is used by Ashcroft et al. (1995) to refer to cross-cultural exchange, which is the formation of new transcultural forms in the contact zones created by colonisation. The contribution of Homi K. Bhabha to the postcolonial theory is that culture and identity are dynamic and evolving and that both are always re-invented in the process of negotiation and interaction. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, who distinguished between a "single voice" and a "double voice" in literature, Bhabha extends the idea of hybridity to the cultural realm, framing it as a "revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). He argues that this process of cultural hybridity generates "something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 211). The hybrid identities formed through the long-term but unequal cultural interactions challenge the binary oppositions and change the power relations. Bhabha (1994) further situates identity within dynamic "spaces of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices" (p. 12), and introduces the third space, a border zone where cultural fusions undermine hegemonic discourses and make marginality a place of negotiation and empowerment. The Third Space is also defined by Soja (1996) as a space where physical, mental, and social dimensions interrelate, and identities can be redefined through the interaction of real and imagined space. In this context, hybridity

represents “the cultural mingling and interaction that happens in colonial and postcolonial settings, bringing about the rise of new, hybrid identities that cannot be deftly classified” (Al-Qassab, 2025, p. 313).

Instead of being a neutral blending, hybridity is subversive, destabilising hierarchies and binaries, and challenging the idea of pure cultures, as well as exposing the constructed nature of identity and revealing the complex power relations between colonisers and the colonised (Saqib et al., 2022). Bhabha (1994) emphasizes that the productivity of colonial power “its shifting forces and fixities... [in] the name of the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (p. 112) demonstrates the inherent instability of colonial authority. Hall and Rutherford (1990) also state that cultures are not fixed but are constantly re-created in the interaction of various identities and influences, and that the concept of a single, authentic cultural identity is impossible. This ambivalence of cultures is created by this dynamic negotiation of cultures, which create new forms through confrontation, in which mimicry creates ambivalence, destabilising colonial power (Butt, 2024). As Bhabha (1994) observes, “We will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space,’ we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (p. 209). The Third Space, then, functions as a liminal place where dominant discourses and rigid identities are disrupted and all social and cultural constructions, such as nation-states, ethnic communities and diasporic groups, are revealed to be hybrid. “In the Third Space, dominant narratives are destabilized, creating new cultural meanings and resistance to imposed identities” (Cherkaoui, 2024, p. 20). Hybridity, therefore, turns into a kind of resistance that rejects cultural purity and is an instrument of criticism to dismantle colonial discourses and affirm plural, dynamic and changing identities. Bhabha also argues that “colonised subjects appropriate and enact elements of the coloniser's culture, creating hybrid identities that resist colonial power and reaffirm it” (Khan et al., 2024, p. 308). Nevertheless, the discursive subversion of colonial authority in the Third Space mainly enables psychological and cultural emancipation as opposed to material or political emancipation. It does not directly deal with labour exploitation, unequal access to resources, or the application of state mechanisms to gain economic advantage. Rather, it is concerned with the construction of subjectivities within the middle ground of cultural encounters between coloniser and colonised. According to Jefferess (2008), this kind of resistance is likely to diminish colonialism to cultural processes, overlooking the material conditions and ideological structures that perpetuate domination. Thus, the Third Space by Bhabha focuses on the symbolic and cultural aspects of resistance without directly addressing the political or economic emancipation of colonised people.

*Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan describes the process of negotiating the Palestinian diasporic identity in the third space, where the hybridity is formed through the interaction of the homeland memory and the experiences of the host country. The novel shows that identity is not predetermined but is constantly created in the process of cultural negotiation, displacement, and adaptation. By way of migrations of the Yacoub family, Alyan (2017) captures the way exile produces fragmentation and at the same time promotes creative reconstitution of the self, thus providing a good example of Bhabha theory of diasporic hybridity.

**Textual Analysis**

*Salt Houses* offers a deep insight into the issues of displacement, memory, and diasporic identity. The novel highlights the conflict of belonging and being an outcast through the multi-generational narrative of a Palestinian family displaced in their homeland, showing how historical, political and social forces can determine the individual and communal identity. Alyan (2017) balances cultural heritage and migration, as the characters search the intermediary spaces between their origins and the needs of the new locations. She uses the metaphor in the title to emphasise the vulnerability of the concept of home, in contrast to the lingering remnants of grief represented by tears. The Palestinian cause is enhanced in the novel by a complicated story that combines historical events with personal experiences. The characters serve as the medium of Alyan's passionate appeal to the recognition and compensation of human suffering, and the novel can be interpreted as the commentary on the complex historical fabric of wars and territorial occupations.

Alyan (2017) predicts the long-term effects of displacement on Palestinian identity. She explains that historical events (including the Nakba and the following conflicts) mould collective memory and personal consciousness. She uses her characters to examine the emotional and psychological effects of exile, loss, and marginalisation. Palestinians who were partially displaced in 1948 and totally displaced in 1967 formed a collective identity that was shaped by displacement and loss. The novelist depicts identity crisis as one of the main themes, showing the destruction that was prevalent in Palestine. As she states, "Everyone with Arab blood is mourning" (Alyan, 2017, p. 63). The novelist captures the ongoing struggle of her people. Souad's fragmented sense of self is evident when she reflects, "Yes she'd lived in Kuwait, but no, she wasn't Kuwaiti, and no she had never been to Palestine, but, yes, she was Palestinian" (Alyan, 2017, p. 129). Palestinian insecurity is further highlighted through Mustafa's words: "They want us to Crumple, to surrender" and "They want us to yield" (Alyan, 2017, p. 26). Imam's observation also sheds light on Palestinian fear, "They've even taken away our deaths. They've robbed us even our dignity of death" (Alyan, 2017, p. 44). The interrogation of Souad by an Israeli soldier also exposes the vulnerability of Palestinians outside their homeland: "Why are you here" (p. 284) and "When had her grandfather left Nablus" (p. 285). Similarly, Linah's hearing the news words "Military, shelling, security" (Alyan, 2017, p. 242) during the Lebanese Civil War reflects the persistent identity crisis. Alyan (2017) emphasizes Souad's uprooted identity again: "Yes she'd lived in Kuwait, but no, she wasn't Kuwaiti, and no she had never been to Palestine, but she was Palestinian" (pp. 209-210). The theme of the constant search of a home echoes all over the novel and proves that the loss of homeland is the loss of nationality and identity.

Palestinian culture has been shaped by the rich cultural and religious heritage of ancient Palestine that could be traced back to the early Canaanite era. The 1948 and 1967 events increased the rate of cultural loss, pushing Palestinians towards transnational identity. Alyan (2017) shows how the Palestinian and American cultures interact and impact individuals, culture, and identity. Mustafa is a symbol of Palestinian culture and the will to keep historical and ideological backgrounds, which reflects the conflicts between tradition and American impact. The novelist illustrates this conflict through Imam Bakri's words to Mustafa: "And our men? They dance to American music and kiss girls in pool hall. They tell themselves that Palestine is this" (Alyan, 2017, p. 44). This cultural tension is felt by both the older and younger

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generation, thus compromising the attempts to maintain the Palestinian heritage. Home therefore becomes a representation of culture and identity; displacement causes cultural conflict. The relationship between Alia and Abdullah is complicated, which is a mirror of the tense relations between the Palestinian and American cultures. Abdullah criticizes the power of the West: “Arabs go over to the West, fall in love with their fake gods, their starlets, and music stars, and drink their poisoned water... We lose our culture. We sell our souls” (Alyan, 2017, p. 190). Alia responds, “Don’t sit there thinking you have some great secret. We’re all a mess, Iraq’s a mess, Lebanon’s a mess, don’t even get me started on Palestine” (Alyan, 2017, p. 190). Alia reveals the multifacetedness of diasporic identity, showing that uprootedness does not only break the connection with the home but also compels people to face the larger socio-political realities that define their lives. In these exchanges, the novelist highlights the precarious nature of the Palestinian culture, which is on the verge of extinction.

Home in the context of diasporic studies is closely connected with the notions of identity, belonging, and human need of stability. To most Palestinians who fled their country after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, displacement has left lasting scars on personal and group consciousness. In Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, refugees usually live in camps where temporary shelters have turned into permanent homes, which strengthens a feeling of vulnerability and social marginalisation. Although these spaces offer physical protection, they are filled with a reminder of loss and a lack of connection to ancestral lands. Alyan (2017) describes the Palestinian exodus generation by the Yacoub family: Souad resides in Beirut, Budur in Boston, Abdullah in London, Manar in Manhattan, and Linah and Zain in Vermont. Atef remembers the different houses he has lived in, a hut in Nablus, the house he shared with Alia in Nablus, a house in Kuwait, a house in Beirut, and a house in Amman, and describes a constant process of uprootedness. The family is faced with a constant sense of uprootedness, starting with their flight out of Jaffa to Nablus in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Six-Day War in 1967, the Gulf War in 1991, and the Lebanese Civil War in 2006. Alyan (2017) highlights chronic nostalgia and yearning of the Palestinian diaspora showing that memory and homeland is still central to selfhood. The novelist uses her characters to show the emotional and cultural price of exile, showing how alienation in the host nations strengthens the urge to reconnect with the ancestral home. The feeling of belonging highlights pessimism of the characters towards their motherland, Palestine: “They took my home, they took my lungs. Kill me. Kill me” (Alyan, 2017, p. 4). This attachment is strengthened by Atef as he tells Zain and Linah about their grand house in Palestine: “Your grandmother used to stay in a house with a garden. In Palestine with her brother... A good house. There was a table under the trees. In summer, we’d sit out there for hours” (Alyan, 2017, p. 273). His reminiscence continues: “Here is Palestine. Here are the streets we’d walk in Nablus, the neighborhood we grew up in. here is everything we loved” (Alyan, 2017, p. 271). Alia’s reflection, “Nostalgia is an affliction” (Alyan, 2017, p. 74), echoes this persistent longing. Throughout the novel, the characters show a strong attachment to their ancestral land and are proud of it, despite being in foreign countries without a warm reception. Exile makes them foreign in the host countries and makes them more determined to go back to their home country as a source of identity. This awareness is always strengthened by the fact that their stay is temporary.

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Alyan (2017) is not only interested in the description of the wars but in the emphasis on the terrible conditions and the terrible circumstances under which refugees live, which compel them to leave their native cities. Nearly every character in the novel is shown to escape war in order to save themselves against the cold and cruel clutches of death and oppression. The repetitive nature of uprootedness subjects them to one war after another; as they flee to a new state, they are usually faced with another war. After the Six-Day War, Mustafa advises his family, "I think we should leave" (Alyan, 2017, p. 270), while during the 2006 Lebanon Civil War, Khal responds to Riham's observations: "People are fighting, bad things are happenings, and people are dying. We cannot do anything" (Alyan, 2017, p. 229). Alyan (2017) also highlights the destruction wrought by the Gulf War: "They've burned everything" (p. 170). The uprooted identity is a constant problem that the characters in the novel face as the wars of 1948, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Gulf War of 1990, and the Lebanese Civil War of 2006 in turn deprive the Yacoub family and other Palestinians of their sense of identity and belonging.

Alyan (2017) throws light on the feeling of belonging and attachment to Palestine and emphasizes the importance of uprootedness in defining individual and collective identity. She shows how past historical events shape current realities by foreshadowing the tragedy of the Nakba, which was later to be succeeded by other wars. She emphasizes the transfer of intergenerational memory, which explains how the past influences the lives of younger generations in new lands. The memories of the characters are used to remind of the pre-1948 Palestine, and the trauma of the Nakba and the following conflicts are intertwined into the story to demonstrate how the past still affects the present situation. The novel anticipates the importance of memory in the past, present, and future, thus, capturing the experiences of individuals and the history of the family as a whole. The memories of her childhood in Palestine affect the way Alia perceives the upbringing of her children in other countries. The novelist is very attentive to the consequences of uprootedness, and the memories of the characters emphasize the importance of her message, which makes *Salt Houses* a critical addition to the discourse on uprootedness. The idea of home reflects the idea of chronotope, which is a metaphorical connection between time and space. The interrelation between memory and existential space can be seen through the analysis of the temporal and spatial dimensions of home. The first home presented is in Jaffa. Salma recalls her home in Jaffa on the night of her daughter's wedding, "the city with the peach-colored house they'd left behind" (Alyan, 2017, p. 9). The old house is still fresh in her mind; she sees the village on the hill, the view of the ocean, and its orange orchards. Salma finds a new home in Nablus after being uprooted from her ancestral home. Although she tries to build a new home, the Nablus house is still shadowed by the memories of Jaffa. Salma reflects, "this remains the new house, the Nablus house. She has come to love it, in a resigned way. It is larger than their Jaffa home, the rooms cavernous, high-ceilinged... But the house remained ghosted with its former life, the dinners and celebrations and quarrels it had witnessed" (Alyan, 2017, pp. 15-16). The houses in Jaffa and Nablus are compared to show how deeply Salma is tied to her roots and how the ongoing struggle with a uprooted identity influences her experience. Her memories of Jaffa are clear and full of spatial and temporal immediacy that constantly affect her life in Nablus. The old house is not just a memory but a lived experience that haunts her present and is a complex chronotope where several time periods and places overlap; this is a manifestation of the inner conflict and uprooted

identity of Salma. Salma tries to bring back a feeling of home in Nablus by planting a garden. Her connection to the land is a symbolic representation of a more profound search of roots and belonging, a way of overcoming the time gap between her life in Jaffa and her present life in Nablus. Claiming the garden as hers, Salma creates a personal space, thus trying to re-create the time and space unity that she once had.

Alyan (2017) uses a polyphonic narrative to analyze the interrelations of memory, identity, and trauma in the Palestinian diaspora. She highlights the role of personal and social backgrounds in the uprootedness process. The dialogicity of *Salt Houses* offers a different path to the emotional and cultural price of migration where the novelist brings the marginalised voices to life. The previous residences of the family in decades serve as the memory repositories, each possessing the historical and emotional content: the ancestral house in Jaffa and the provisional dwellings in Beirut and Paris. The experiences of both characters may be considered microcosms of the general human condition, and thus, shed light on the complexity of uprootedness in diaspora. Alyan (2017) explores the nature of dislocation and uprootedness that changes the meaning of home, creates spaces that are both familiar and alien, and uses characters like Mustafa to highlight the precarious condition of belonging within diaspora. When Salma leaves the house to go to Amman, Mustafa inherits the re-territorized house, which he sees as a familiar and neglected place: "...the house appears unaltered, the doorway framed by trees. Only upon closer inspection do signs of neglect become apparent... windows streaky with dust, a slackness to the doorknob, which turns too easily in Mustafa's hand" (Alyan, 2017, p. 28). He observes it as "a beautiful trinket that he cannot touch without its breaking" (Alyan, 2017, p. 29). He physically inherits the house, but its spirit is gone, and Salma is gone, leaving a vacuum. The scattered objects he encounters, "the kitchen counters are scattered with newspapers... A jar of pickles sits atop one of honey; there is a grayish plant he never remembers to water on the windowsill above the sink" (Alyan, 2017, p. 29), emphasize the difference between the care of Salma and his negligence, and the fact that home does not just exist, but is created. Home is a practice of making and knowing types of dwelling and belonging. The mosque is where Mustafa finds his real home and identifies with his roots and community. The mosque gives him a feeling of belonging, unity and attachment to the lost Palestine, which he sees as his real home. The novelist shows how personal objects and memories are emotional and connects the past with the present in the life of the diaspora. She uses her characters to emphasize how objects and spaces can maintain cultural identity and create a sense of nostalgia. The changing views of the story, between the desire of Salma to go to Jaffa and the life of Mustafa in Nablus, emphasize the plurality of home. Memories and tangible objects, such as Alia's "seashells she filled with bobby pins" and "the tangerine dress she'd bought right before her trip to Kuwait and never worn" (Alyan, 2017, p. 71), are reminiscent and personal histories. Likewise, the experience of the Kuwait war in Paris makes Souad feel the loss, as she understands that she cannot go back to her past: "There would be no return. Her clothing ... the large evil eye dangling from her window. The map she'd hung after an argument with her mother, enormous, spanning an entire wall with blues and greens... She suddenly recognises it all as lost" (Alyan, 2017, p. 150). The idea of home, along with the development of the narrative, is introduced not only as the physical place but as a full-fledged emotional and cultural hoax. Alia, Souad, and Atef's reflections demonstrate that home is a place of comfort, safety, memories, and family. The title of the novel, *Salt*

Houses, is a metaphor of the instability of the diasporic home, which can be destroyed by displacement, war, and migration. Atef remembers former homes as “floating... like jinn, past lovers... The sloping roof of his mother’s hut, the marbled tiles in Salma’s kitchen, the small house he shared with Alia in Nablus” (Alyan, 2017, p. 237), thus supporting the interrelatedness of memory, time, and space. The novelist therefore presents a heart-rending discussion of memory, displacement, and identity by highlighting the repeated influences of the past on the current realities and the eternal human desire to belong.

Alyan (2017) explains the difficulties of being an outsider in new social and geopolitical environments, emphasizing the marginalisation that defines diasporic experience. She explores in detail the identity crisis in the life of the Palestinian diaspora where the dispersion and uprootedness processes often create a sense of alienation in their countries of residence. The mass migration, either as a result of political struggle or as an individual effort to avoid violence, is presented in the novel as a factor that leads to the development of new identities and a sense of belonging. The novelist prefigures the relations between minority and majority groups in the host societies, showing the isolation of migrants because of their ethno-cultural background. This marginalization exacerbates identity crises, as it is the case with Manar: “Manar nursed an image of herself, dusty, solemn, walking onto Palestinian soil, squinting in the sun. So, when she peed on that stick and a little blue cross appeared, marking her to this new, alien life ...” (Alyan, 2017, p. 244). Salma is a representation of this displacement; her memories of Jaffa, “the city with the peach-coloured house they’d left behind” (Alyan, 2017, p.9) , and her inability to recognize Nablus as her new home depict the conflict between the past and the present chronotopes. The story starts in 1963 with the view of Salma in Nablus, which puts her identity crisis in a temporal-spatial displacement. Subsequent sections shift through various geopolitical contexts: Nablus (1965), Kuwait (1967 and 1977), Amman, Beirut, Boston, and Jaffa, each of which is a distinct phase that influences the changing identities of the characters.

### **Conclusion**

Alyan (2017) presents an insightful reflection of identity, memory, and place among the Palestinian diaspora in *Salt Houses*, and she shows how uprootedness reinvents personal and collective consciousness. The chronotopic structure of the novel, past and present, home and exile, are interwoven to show the complicated negotiation of cultural, emotional, and social belonging between generations. The examples of the Yacoub family, who initially from their homeland, Jaffa, moved to Nablus, and then to Kuwait, then Amman, then Beirut and finally to Boston, provide an example of how memories, material artefacts, and cultural practices can be used as anchors in the face of uprootedness. Salma, Mustafa, Alia, and Souad are characters who have to find their way between nostalgia and adaptation, thus revealing the vulnerability and strength of diasporic life. Metaphor ‘Salt Houses’ reminds the readers of the impermanence and frailty of home. The novel shows that diaspora is constantly created and renegotiated through the process of memory, place, and the desire to belong. It shows how diasporic uprooting ironically becomes the key to the characters developing new, hybrid identities. Placing personal and collective histories within broader socio-political histories, the novelist highlights the unavoidable connection between exile and identity formation, highlighting that the subjects of diaspora are in

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a constant state of negotiation between the need to be rooted and the necessity to be mobile.

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