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# Intersectionality of Patriarchy and Colonialism: A Postcolonial Ecofeminist Reading of Sahar Khalifeh's *The End of Spring*

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**ABSTRACT.** This essay examines the postcolonial ecofeminist implications of *The End of Spring* (2008) by Sahar Khalifa, a Palestinian nationalist and feminist. Palestinian women are confronted with a dual burden of disabling discourses: the master narrative of the Israeli occupation and the masculine rhetoric of the colonized Palestinian man. The interpretations of the novel from a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective bolster the postcolonial ecofeminist argument that the Israeli exploitation and occupation of Palestinian land and the double oppression and marginalization of Palestinian women are intertwined within patriarchal and colonial systems. The treatise highlights the maternal and physical contributions made by women to Palestinian liberation and resistance project and how the masculinization of the Palestinian resistance obstructs the liberation project and hampers Palestinian nationalistic objectives. Khalifeh emphasizes the resistance of women against patriarchal and colonial forces in *The End of Spring*, as evidenced by the resolute perspectives of Umm Suad and Suad, her daughter. The participation of these two females in acts of resistance demonstrates that motherhood and the idea of a motherland, particularly in a struggle against patriarchal norms and colonialist power, are not anti-feminist but complementary and compatible with feminism.

**Keywords**: postcolonial; ecofeminism; patriarchy; Sahar Khalifeh; *The End of Spring*; women; Palestine.

## Interseccionalidade do Patriarcado e do Colonialismo: Uma Leitura Ecofeminista Pós-colonial de O Fim da Primavera, de Sahar Khalifeh

**RESUMO.** Este ensaio examina as implicações ecofeministas pós-coloniais de The End of Spring (2008), de Sahar Khalifa, uma nacionalista e feminista palestiniana. As mulheres palestinianas são confrontadas com um duplo fardo de discursos incapacitantes: a narrativa mestra da ocupação israelita e a retórica masculina do homem palestiniano colonizado. As interpretações do romance numa perspectiva ecofeminista pós-colonial reforçam o argumento ecofeminista pós-colonial de que a exploração, a ocupação israelita das terras palestinianas e a dupla opressão e marginalização das mulheres palestinianas estão interligadas nos sistemas patriarcais e coloniais. O tratado destaca as contribuições maternas e físicas feitas pelas mulheres para o projeto de libertação e resistência palestiniana, e como a masculinização da resistência palestiniana obstrui o projeto de libertação e dificulta os objectivos nacionalistas palestinianos. Khalifeh enfatiza a resistência das mulheres contra as forças patriarcais e coloniais em The End of Spring, como evidenciado pelas perspetivas resolutas de Umm Suad e Suad, sua filha. A participação destas duas mulheres em atos de resistência demonstra que a maternidade e a ideia de uma pátria mãe, particularmente numa luta contra as normas patriarcais e o poder colonialista, não são anti-feministas, mas sim complementares e compatíveis com o feminismo.

**Palavras-chave:** pós-colonial; ecofeminismo; patriarcado; Sahar Khalifeh; O fim da primavera; mulher; Palestina.

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## Introduction

In contrast to American and Western feminists, Palestinian feminists appear to attach significant importance to the role of mothers and motherhood. To commemorate International Women's Day in 1999, feminist organizations in Palestine displayed banners bearing the statement "Woman makes up half of society and gives birth to the other half" (Amireh, 2003, p. 765), which was taken to honor the Palestinian mother. Nonetheless, as stated by Amal Amireh, the motto, which underscores the sexual and reproductive capabilities of women, serves as an enduring impediment to the advancement of the Palestinian feminism. Amireh contends that in Palestinian feminist discourse, maternal metaphors reinforce patriarchal nationalist

ideologies concerning the bodies and sexuality of women, thereby illuminating the constraints of contemporary feminist discourse.

Amireh also asserts that Sahar Khalifeh is responsible for this reworking of tropes associated with patriarchy. Furthermore, she contends that patriarchal discourse is inherent in any representation of women as motherlands. Therefore, the commendable public feminism of Sahar Khalifeh does not grant her body of work an absolute exemption from feminist criticism. Arguably, the celebration of motherhood could potentially serve as a strategic maneuver for Palestinian feminism, enabling them to distinguish their movement from the more individualistic strains prevalent in the West and the United States (Angierski, 2014).

On the other hand, the Palestinian resistance literature has neglected the role of Palestinian women in the national resistance, as the enduring symbolic association between women and land, along with the absence of real women's experiences and voices, is evident in Palestinian resistance writings. Palestinian poets and authors, such as Ghassan Kanafani, Taha Muhammad Ali, Mahmoud Darwish, Murid Barghouthi, and Abd al-Raheem Mahmoud, have restricted women's role to the domains of maternity, marriage, love, and motherland allegory. In their writings, they refer to women as mere inspiring muses and a recurring land motif. Thus, they have reduced women to mere things or symbols, portraying them as muses, mothers, and mistresses, denying them the complexity of individuality. According to Khader (2007), Palestinian revolutionaries participate, albeit significantly differently, in the symbolic marginalization of Palestinian women from national, political, and historical discourse.

As opposed to merely repeating patriarchal stereotypes, in *The End of Spring* Khalifeh (2008) challenges the male-dominated resistance narrative and the gendered portrayal of resistance as exclusively a male-dominated task. In a 2009 interview with Jaber Enaya, Khalifeh claims, "So have I offered something different from what the Resistance poets have contributed? I think so, or rather, I'm certain I have" (Jaber, 2009). Khalifeh audaciously exposes the maternal and feminine underpinnings of Palestinian national resistance, thereby asserting her identity as a postcolonial ecofeminist, who realizes the inextricable connection between the binary subjugation and oppression of women, subjected to brutal colonial and patriarchal systems, and the exploitation and devastation of the Palestinian land at the hands of the Israeli colonizers.

Through the reclamation of the metaphor of the female as mother(land), Khalifeh establishes a correlation between the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian land and the assault on women's bodies and freedom by both Palestinian men and Israeli invaders. She also reveals that the Israeli occupation contributed to women's unintended material and social advancements, further complicating this portrayal. Khalifeh presents a critique of the male-oriented Palestinian resistance poetry and its masculine treatment of land, a genre that is heavily reliant on the woman as a mother (land) symbol, one of several women-associated symbols that consistently shape and inform the genre. As Honaida Ghanim puts it:

> Despite their national enthusiasm and appeal for social change, they were unable to transgress the patriarchic rural that was hegemonic in Palestinian society. This hegemonic narrative was interwoven in three themes: 1) using the lexicon of natural disaster to conceptualize the 1948 events, presenting them as an irresistible natural disaster (even by God who appeared during the events as pathetic and useless); 2) representing the Palestinian defeat in 1948 through patriarchal language of 'collective shame', 'land rape', and 'honor lost'; and 3) articulating the national liberation project as masculine, promising to liberate the "captured land-woman" and to recover the collective honor of the nation (Ghanim, 2009, p. 23).

The reiteration of colonial discourse in the literature of resistance occurs in the objectification of the Palestinian woman as merely an object not as an independent individual capable of thought and resistance. Therefore, it can be argued that Palestinian women are "[...] burdened by a twice-disabling discourse: the disabling master narrative of colonialism and an exact duplication of the colonizer's discourse by colonized men" (Weagel, 2009, p. 28).

## Theoretical underpinnings

Western academics and scholars have mostly contributed to the development of ecofeminist discourse; however, this rhetoric does not consistently consider the inconsistencies that arise from woman-nature and human-nature relationships in non-Western contexts. Sahar Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* (2008) is replete with such instances that contribute to the development of a relatively different feminist analysis—postcolonial ecofeminism—as a means of explaining such discrepancies that stem from women-nature and human-nature associations. Postcolonial ecofeminism asserts that in order to comprehend the relationship

between women, land, and the natural environment, particularly in the Palestinian context, it is critical to take into account the material conditions of women that are intrinsically linked to their position as constituents of postcolonial societies.

Khalifeh has received scant criticism in general, and her writings that explore postcolonial ecofeminism have received even less scrutiny. It is perhaps surprising that this issue has received so little critical attention, despite the Israeli-Palestinian conflict having its roots in land and despite the rise of feminism in Palestine that emphasizes postcolonial, ecological, and feminist concerns. According to Nawal El Saadawi,

> Women have always been an integral part of the national liberation movement in the countries of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. They fought side by side with the men in Algeria against French colonialism, and as part of the [Palestine Liberation Organization's struggle against Zionist and imperialist aggressive policies aimed at depriving the Palestinian people of their national right to self-determination]. And women fought too in Yemen [...]. Through their participation in the struggle for national liberation and for economic and social reconstruction they have gained many rights (Saadawi, 1980, p. xxix).

This essay endeavors to address this deficiency in criticism by scrutinizing the literary and political implications of a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective within the Palestinian context. The Palestinian context is rife with feminist and postcolonial ecofeminist issues, including colonial control over land, exploitation of the environment, and dual violence against women subjected to occupation and patriarchy.

Postcolonial ecocriticism, as a political stance and a method of interpreting literature, roots itself in colonial and environmental concerns. In *Critical Insights: Nature and the Environment*, Scott Slovic argues that the environment is ever-present in literature, and the natural world is pertinent in all contexts. Although it is universally acknowledged that human beings are creatures of nature and cannot exist without it, we "[...] for some peculiar reason, like to think of ourselves as being free from the encumbrances of physical needs" (Slovic, 2013, p. 3). Literary critics sustain this conception by disregarding the natural world and consolidating the notion that nature is merely a descriptive filler. David Mazel effectively encapsulates the ecocritical perspective on literature: "Ecocritics simply study literature 'as if the earth mattered"—and since the earth does matter to all of us ... perhaps all of us should try to keep the earth in mind when we think about literature (Slovic, 2013, p. 5). So, when margins are brought to the center, some fresh understandings of the interdependence of humans and the natural world emerge, and novel conceptualizations also emerge regarding the intrinsic nature of the environment devoid of any ideological attachments.

Environmental critics work to see nature in its natural state, not as a symbol to be manipulated. This reading regimen is consistent with an environmentalist philosophy that emphasizes the damage caused by a capitalist view of the use of nature in industry and the dependence of humanity on the environment. Ecocriticism investigates the possible dangers of the metaphorical 'use' of nature and the consequences of this utilitarian attitude on the destruction of the environment in the non-literal realm. Lawrence Buell contends that:

> There is the tendency among writers to represent the country as close to nature as it is, yet the conception of represented nature as an ideological screen becomes unfruitful if it is used to portray the green world as nothing more than the projective fantasy or social allegory (Buell, 1995, p. 36).

Buell's ecocriticism and the growing interest in the field suggest that some literary scholars are eager to incorporate environmental themes into their work and to draw attention to the growing number of devastating natural disasters caused by things like climate change, acid rain, typhoons, and hurricanes. Therefore, ecocriticism finds favor with an academic community that has historically been confined to the examination of metaphorical representations. Ecocriticism, as stated by Jay Parini, "[...] marks a reengagement with realism, with the actual universe of rocks, trees, and rivers that lies behind the wilderness of signs" (Newman, 2005, p. 9).

In a similar vein, Khalifeh contends that her involvement with the tangible, bodily, and terrestrial distinguishes her from the male Palestinian poets and writers of resistance. She states that:

> I have presented the Palestinian society in a realistic manner, earthly, visible, embodied. I have portrayed characters from the very bottom of society, but also intellectual and politically active characters, Palestinian society is not only made of heroism and struggle, nor is it merely a Spartan community. It is a society of fathers, mothers, children, workers, farmers, artists, and intellectual. In other words, it's a society rather than a symbol, a slogan, a song, or an allegorical beloved. We're people of blood and flesh and weaknesses, as well as strengths (Jaber, 2009).

Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* (2008) thus engages in a deliberate and conscious exploration of the dichotomy between representation and reality, as well as allegory and society. Furthermore, her genuine realist principles serve as the foundation for an invigorating ethical framework that promotes clarity and opposition to imagination. In order for her work to be comprehensible, Khalifeh employs realism to imbue her characters with life and substance. Alternating between classical Arabic and local dialects, she writes about common people, including the impoverished of Palestine, so that they may read and comprehend her writings. In her interview previously mentioned with Jaber (2009), she states, "I am absolutely against elitist literature, and my conviction is that literature is from and towards the people". This principle of legibility is consistent with a postcolonial ecofeminist attitude that links the veneration of 'high culture' and its male authors of incomprehensible texts to the subordination of women and the exploitation of land in a colonial context.

Khalifeh's stance is consistent with that of numerous ecocritics, including Allison Steele, Barbara Cook, and Heidi Hutner, who argue that the very term nature is unnatural and unstable (Cook, 2008). Postcolonial ecofeminist literary critics hold the view that representations of the natural world, which are invariably saturated with binary, masculine, hierarchical, and colonial thought, invariably involve gender and subordination. Consequently, they refute Buell's assertion that one can understand nature without reference to culture. While women are believed to be closer to trees and Mother Nature than they are to the privileged sphere of culture, this does not mean that nature cannot be read as nature or a tree cannot be read as a tree. Rather, it simply means that there is a connection between women's degradation and the natural world. This article upholds the postcolonial ecofeminist position that there exists a correlation between Palestinian women's rights and their colonized land.

Sahar Khalifeh contends that the way to resist detrimental binary thought is to explicate the complications that result from specific varieties of binary thought. She demonstrates the harmonious existence of categories, such as nature versus society and man versus woman, and the interconnectedness of their meanings. When we de-emphasize, disregard, and substitute this reciprocity, a hierarchy becomes problematic. Khalifeh's primary objective in *The End of Spring* is to highlight the significance of women's involvement in acts of resistance while also contesting the traditional masculine portrayals of Palestinian resistance—the notion that liberation is exclusively the domain of men—which only benefit women without meaningfully involving them. The novelist delves into the interrelationships between Palestinian resistance and women's emancipation, simultaneously questioning the mistaken prioritization of nationalist interests over feminist concerns.

Women in the Arab World have historically been pivotal participants in rebellions, both within and beyond the arena of conflict, as Nawal El Saadawi explains. Nonetheless, despite the success of a revolution, the labor and self-sacrifice of women do not consistently result in tangible benefits or a reduction of patriarchal dominance.

> Their representation within the political power structure is always limited to a minority [...]. The new ruling classes and governments are composed of men, and have a tendency quickly to forget the problems faced by women, or at least not to give them the attention and effort that are required. Instead of attempting to sweep away patriarchal class relations within the family, these are maintained in one form or another, and the values related to them continue to hold sway (Saadawi, 1980, p. xii).

Khalifeh offers a crucial analysis of Palestinian revolutionaries who are disinterested in or insensitive to the plight of women, highlighting their maternal strength and unique contributions to resistance efforts. Palestinian patriarchy devalues caring and maternal acts; Khalifeh reaffirms the significance of the maternal and caregiving roles that are devalued by Palestinian masculinity. By advocating for a reevaluation of the tangible and distinct contributions of women to Palestinian resistance, she does not reduce them to mere procreative abilities as the traditional mother-land motif does, which reinforces the postcolonial ecofeminist cause. The interpretations of Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* from a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective reinforce the ecofeminist argument that the subjugation of women and the control of land are intertwined within patriarchal and hierarchical systems.

Ynestra King elucidates how the historical confinement of women to the natural domain, rather than the more esteemed and elevated world of culture, functioned to rationalize their subordination. King contends that the establishment of the industrial civilization on the ruins of nature reinforces the subjugation of women due to the perception that women have been intimately connected with nature (Gaard, 1998). Sherry Ortner (1974) asserts that women have always been linked to nature across all civilizations due to their

physical characteristics, especially their ability to reproduce. Ortner further complicates the oversimplified relationship between women and the natural world by demonstrating that within the masculine cultural imagination, women are undervalued rather than "equal" to nature, as they are considered to be incapable of controlling it.

> It might simply be stressed here that the revised argument would still account for the pan-cultural devaluation of women, for even if women are not equated with nature, they are nonetheless seen as representing a lower order of being, as being less transcendental of nature than men are. Why they might be viewed in that way (Ortner, 1974, p. 73).

This theory aligns with capitalist conceptions of the masculine self, which are characterized by freedom, autonomy, and significance. These notions have their origins in the concepts of manhood prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, Rousseau (2009) conceptualized humanness as reason while deeming women to be of a lower order of humanity due to their corporeal attributes rather than their mental ones. Rousseau held the conviction that a woman is inherently and naturally more reliant on men.

> Woman and man are made for each other, but their mutual dependence is not equal. Men depend on women because of their desires. Women depend on men because of their desires, and because of their needs [...]. By the very law of nature, women, as much for their own sake as for that of their children, are at the mercy of men's judgments (Rousseau, 2009, p. 73).

According to this conceptualization of personhood, women are subordinate to and tangential to men. Males assert an unbalanced reciprocal dependence, deeming them the superior species and the standard form of humanity.

According to Ann Cahill, this context traditionally delineates humanity in opposition to the corporeal form. To rationalize perceptions of women's intrinsic inferiority and to distinguish men from animals, philosophers such as Hegel and Rousseau applied the concept of 'mastery over the intellect' as a criterion for humanness (Angierski, 2014). Women, by virtue of their stronger bodily connections resulting from menstruation and pregnancy, were unable to attain this level of intellectual prowess to the same extent as men. Cahill (2001) argues that the concept of the generic human was established at the expense of the exclusion of women, thereby criticizing the logical underpinnings of patriarchy. Therefore, negating the recognition of human dependence on nature can, in a sense, sustain a depreciation and relegation of women; Rousseau argues that while women, similar to nature, are essential, their worth is comparatively lower than that of men. Women, according to Cahill (2001, p. 52),

> [...] absorb, embody, and satisfy material human needs demanded by the fact of embodiment, so that the (male) intellect might fulfill its project unfettered by such lowly, worldly exigencies [...]. Women were bodies so that men could be minds—so that men could be human.

The value of nature and women is thus limited to serving as metaphorical counterpoints to culture and men. Ecofeminism disavows the idea that the environment and women are opposing institutions that enable the definition of the human. Khalifeh, similarly, challenges this hierarchical conception of personhood within the framework of Palestinian resistance. Rather than disregarding the significance of women's mental contributions, she exalts their distinctive corporeal capabilities. Contrary to the argument of critic Amal Amireh, it can be argued that the focus on maternity is not perceived as anti-feminist or a backward and conventional connection between womanhood and maternity. Rather, it is regarded as a conscious recapture of a distinct masculine stereotype: the motherland.

Postcolonial feminism originated from the gendered history of colonialism. In other words, the colonial power continuously imposed Western norms on the countries it had conquered. The colonized males cherished their pre-colonial culture because of their enslavement under colonialism, and they persisted in fighting for it even after they achieved independence (Bulbeck, 1998). Postcolonial feminists argue that colonial-era oppression—more especially racial, class, and ethnic oppression—has kept women in subordinate status in postcolonial countries. They reject the stereotypes of non-Western women as helpless, silent victims and instead believe that gender inequality is the primary cause of patriarchy. There is also criticism of the idea that Western women are modern, intelligent, and powerful. Due to the reinforcement of socially constructed roles that positioned women as inferiors, patriarchy and colonization both played a part in the historical subjugation of women. Literary works, particularly those authored by women who regularly testify to the anguish of living under the yoke of patriarchy and occupation, reflect this type of servitude. By investigating this oppression, Sahar Khalifeh hopes to challenge occupation and patriarchy with *The End of*

*Spring*. As Ashcroft et al. (2007, p. 66) contend, "Empire and patriarchy act as analogous to each other and both exert control over female colonial subjects, who are, thus, doubly colonized by imperial/patriarchal power".

Despite ongoing efforts by ecofeminists to reconcile ecological and feminist concerns, there are still challenges that hinder the achievement of full unity within the global ecofeminist movement. Therefore, for the principles of postcolonial and ecofeminist thought to be more cohesive and united, ecofeminism needs the voices of more postcolonial ecofeminists. The critical framework for this essay is established upon these overarching postcolonial ecofeminist principles. This research explores the ways in which Sahar Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* theorizes a postcolonial ecofeminist framework that is more susceptible to issues of environment, colonialism, and gender. *The End of Spring* (2008) offers a reassessment of motherhood and an explanation of the issues that arise from a dichotomy between nature and culture. Khalifeh vividly highlights how "[...] the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are intimately bound up with notions of class, caste, race, colonialism, and neo-colonialism" (Kaur, 2012, p. 100).

## Discussion

Mirriam Cooke (1996) argues in *Women and the War Story* that the post-Israel establishment environment presented Palestinian women with novel obstacles in their struggle against Israeli colonial rule. The formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the early 1960s granted Palestinian women official authorization to engage in resistance activities. At the Palestine Liberation Organization's first congress in 1964, women took part and made a strong declaration, pledging to fight alongside men to free Palestine (Priyanka & Koudur, 2018).

Women's contributions to the national resistance have not received enough attention in Palestinian literature and historical accounts. Cooke (1996) draws attention to research by Widad Barghuthi that examines how male poets of the 20th century represented women in political roles. Barghuthi asserts that men's literature conspicuously fails to depict women in the political environment. She further contends that the political and social positions of women are completely absent from 20th-century male (masculine) poetry. For example, despite the active involvement of women in the anti-colonial uprisings of the 1930s, renowned poet Ibrahim Tuqan refrained from making any allusions to it in his poetry; rather, he referred to women as merely 'muses'. Even after women took part in resistance actions during the 1948 and 1967 wars, the same patriarchal legacy persisted. Regarding the acceptance and advocacy of women's political participation, masculine attitudes remain largely unchanged. Barghuthi notes that the acceptance of women's representation in men's poetry remained unchanged despite the involvement of women in the recurring Palestinian uprisings (Cooke, 1996).

In her novel, *The End of Spring* (2008), Sahar Khalifeh challenges the patriarchal legacy, the colonial system, and the oversimplified representation of women as mere land symbols. By rewriting the woman as a land motif, the novel challenges Amal Amireh's previously stated claim that an obsession with maternal ideology invariably produces patriarchal values. In her Palestinian version of postcolonial ecofeminism, Khalifeh raises problematic questions about the nature of the bond between women, land, and maternity. Khalifeh illustrates, on the one hand, how the Israeli occupation of land symbolically entails the encroachment upon the traditional home space of women and their bodies. In light of Leila Brammer's (1998) 'Ecofeminism, the Environment, and Social Movements', a research article presented at the National Communication Association 1998 Convention, Khalifeh exemplifies a typical ecofeminist position:

> Eco-Feminism: was a term first used by 'Francoise D Eaubonnne' in 1980 and gained popularity in protests and actions against continued ecological disaster. It is a joining of environmental, feminist, and women's spirituality concerns. As the environmental movement along with environmental crises raised the consciousness of women to the decay of the earth, they began to see a parallel between the devaluation of earth and the devaluation of women. (Brammer, 1998, p. X)

Khalifeh stands out as a postcolonial ecofeminist and rejects the romanticization of women or any idealized connection between women and land, thus fighting against women being categorized into nature vs. culture. *The End of Spring* thus navigates between these postcolonial ecofeminist concepts, reclaiming the voices of Palestinian women and their experiences in the project of resistance and liberation.

In the novel, Khalifeh establishes a connection between the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the distortion of the natural environment on the one hand and patriarchy and the violation of women's rights on the other, by means of the portrayal of Issa's character and by describing the Israeli assault on Nablus. Issa,

Ahmad's cousin, who works in an Israeli settlement, causes problems for a young Majdi, Ahmad's elder brother. Issa persuades Majdi to work with him in the settlement to earn money, which enrages Majdi's father, Fadel al-Qassam, a journalist opposed to the Israeli occupation: ''I can understand you working in their factories, but the land? Working for the Jews on our own land! Isn't that wonderful?" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 24). Fadel al-Qassam considers agricultural labor in territories formerly occupied by Israel to be abhorrent and a betrayal; he issues a public threat of disownment against his son Majdi should he once again behold him collaborating with Issa in the colony. Fadel observes that while it is comprehendible that Palestinians would be compelled to work in Israeli factories, such employment in the occupied territory is strictly prohibited and serves as a potent symbol of Palestinians' exile and degradation. Issa continues laboring in the colony, potentially out of destitution or apathy towards the symbolic ramifications associated with Palestinian labor in Palestinian-occupied territories.

The reader encounters Issa for the first time while he is working in the occupied fields beyond the Israeli fence, through which Ahmad develops feelings for Mira, a beautiful young Israeli girl, who later on puts him in trouble and steals his kitten, Ambar. Issa thinks the girl is completely unthreatening, but Ahmad, who is oversensitive and an introvert, finds the girl exciting but frightening. Issa's teasing remark to Ahmad regarding Ahmad's apprehension of the young Jewish girl foreshadows later in the novel that she expressed misogynistic attitudes toward women. Issa mockingly informs Ahmad, "'Afraid of her? She's just a little girl. A puff of air could blow her away. He pressed his index finger to his thumb as if to squash something and said, 'Like a louse, like a louse'" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 26-27).

In Issa's perspective, all women are "[...] squash-able, things louses [...]'' and, eventually, "[...] fuck-able, sexual toys [...]" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 26), due to perhaps his economic deprivation, social degradation, and, most significantly, his emasculation caused by the Israeli occupation. Speaking of the patriotic, courageous, and insightful Suad, Umm Suad's daughter and an anti-colonization and patriarchy girl, Issa argues:

> She was just another of those stupid idiots. He knew her and knew her type. There were many just like her at the university. Carrying books so everyone would know they were educated and well-bred and respectable. And they were nothing but tramps. They were only good for that kind of thing. And despite that, they hold their noses in the air. Girls puffed up like stinkweed thistles—if you poke them just the tiniest bit, they explode and spray their stinky juice everywhere. What a sight! (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 131).

This passage conveys Issa's feelings of apprehension and envy towards a more privileged social class, specifically a privileged female class that, in his estimation, ought to be subordinate to him by virtue of their femininity. Issa, who has lived his entire life under Israel's rule as a land-worker and, as such, has felt the disgrace of poverty and humiliation more strongly than the other characters, is enraged by 'uppity' women with their modern haircuts and short pants, symbols of feminine privilege. The use of chauvinist language, which harbors undertones of sexual assault, expresses this indignation. He draws a comparison between women and 'stinkweed thistles', which emit a 'stinky juice' when pricked or penetrated. Issa asserts that these women's education and portrayal of a 'respectable' image are merely superficial facades, concealing their true nature as degraded and repugnant sexual beings.

Khalifeh therefore associates misogyny with degraded masculinity. Issa's engagement in degrading fieldwork as a result of Israeli persecution incites indignation and hatred towards a specific group of privileged women. Khalifeh scrutinizes the manner in which occupation compels men to perform dehumanizing forms of wage labor and thus devalues traditional masculinity. Khalifeh establishes a correlation between the debasement of males and the harm inflicted upon women by patriarchy; she demonstrates how the prevailing animosity fostered by the patriarchal system forms the foundation of violence directed at women.

Near the end of the novel, the subject of sexual assault and binary violence against women resurfaces again. Amid the Israeli assault on Nablus on April 5 and 8, which occurred during the Second Intifada, a period of heightened tensions and hostilities between the Palestinian resistance and the Israeli occupation from 2002 to 2005, the Jewish soldiers emitted a menacing admonition through loudspeakers affixed to minarets. This admonition reflects Khalifeh's most explicit associations of the sexual encroachment upon women with the violent assault on the Palestinian territories: "People of Nablus, you whores, we're coming to screw you!" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 184). The identical menaces of the Israeli army resurface again: ''People of Nablus! All you whores! We're coming to... you!' That's what they shouted from loudspeakers" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 194).

In describing their military operation in Nablus, the occupation forces employ the rape trope; conversely, they characterize their colonial endeavor of infringement and invasion through the lens of brutal sexual

dominance over the bodies of women. Khalifeh argues that the Israeli forces employ rape culture language to highlight their maliciously masculine nature by referring to all Palestinians, male and female, as 'whores', as opposed to the comparatively less severe sexual threat, 'We're coming to kill you'. By doing so, these soldiers objectify Palestinian men, their opponents; they can feel superior to them and thus establish themselves as more 'manly'.

Furthermore, the home, the novel's typical space for women, is in danger from the occupation forces. Khalifeh describes how the ongoing risk of home-based 'rape' and the constant encroachment of private property shattered Palestinians' sense of security and privacy both in their own homes and in the real world. The article 'Walking Through Walls' by Eyal Weizman highlights the manner in which the Israel-Palestine conflict altered Palestinian perceptions of the sacredness of the domestic sphere:

> Walls, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have lost something of their traditional conceptual simplicity and material fixity, so as to be rendered – on different scales and occasions – as flexible entities, responsive to changing political and security environments; as permeable elements, through which both resistance and security forces literally travel; and as transparent mediums, through which soldiers can now see and through which they can now shoot. As I will attempt to demonstrate, the changing nature of walls transforms the built environment into a flexible «frontier zone», temporary, contingent and never complete (Weizman, 2006, p. 8).

Similar to how the apprehension of sexual assault constrains the mobility of women, the colonizer augments his or her own surveillance capabilities while limiting the mobility of the colonized Palestinians. Hence, borders and consent to traverse them lose significance when viewed through the lens of patriarchy and colonialism. Within the framework of colonialism, rape functions as a 'terrorist institution' (Angierski, 2014), restricting women's movement in public areas; nonetheless, control, dominance, violation, and death confront the entire Palestinian population—both men and women—in response. Khalifeh argues that the rhetoric of aggressive masculinity supports patriarchy and colonization, highlighting how violent perceptions of masculine gender performance shape colonial and patriarchal institutions of supremacy and hegemony. However, Khalifeh does not establish a romantic or mystic connection between women and the land -one that would neglect or prevent women from participating in the resistance. Khalifeh does not equate the transgression of the land with the oppression of women without demonstrating the pivotal role that women have played in forming the Palestinian national project.

Umm Suad also ingeniously reinterprets the archetype of the motherland. On the one hand, she represents a country; she is the motherland herself. She takes on the role of Nablus' mother, caring, feeding, sewing, and asking, "If every mother asked her son to make the promise not to fight, would we still kill and fight?" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 191). Umm Suad provides sustenance and shelter for Palestinian freedom fighters, distributes warm clothes, and assumes the role of a foster mother for a significant number of Palestinian youth. Therefore, Umm Suad wishes for peace as a mother who lovingly carries out her conventional responsibilities.

The cruelty of the Israeli occupation troops and their frequent incursions into the West Bank are depicted by Khalifeh in her book. She also talks about the soldiers' employment of highly advanced weaponry and the ongoing bombardment of Nablus. Amidst the dire and horrifying circumstances, Umm Suad and the group of female members volunteer at Hosh al-Atout, a community kitchen. She considers feeding impoverished civilians, combatants, and security personnel to be her responsibility. The violent assaults carried out by Jews have become the norm for her, and she provides assistance to the civilian population in managing the dire circumstances.

The oversensitive chap, Ahmad, isolates himself from his family and seeks refuge at Umm Suad's residence. Umm Suad takes Ahmad in and tries to feed him, since she recognizes his strange mental state. As a mother console her son, she tells Ahmad, "You should eat, because you're young. You have your whole life ahead of you. Eat so you can grow and become an adult" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 189). While all of Umm Suad's children have moved to other parts of the world, Suad, her mother's daughter, continues to work in her mother's role and engages in resistance action.

Khalifeh's account of Umm Suad reveals that her motherhood furthers feminist and nationalistic objectives. It is revealed to the reader that Umm Suad was subjected to verbal abuse by her spouse,

> When he was around he'd been like a mule, a numbskull. He'd bellow and shake the whole house with his voice. 'Hey woman,' he'd say to her [Umm Suad]. 'Hey stupid. Hey idiot' [...]. And she would run here and run there, wipe up after this one and breastfeed that one and help her old mother-in-law hobble to the bathroom (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 178).

According to Khalifeh, being a woman and a mother is a full-time mental and physical job that women do without getting praise or pay from patriarchal society: "[…] And even him, even this father [...] who looked after him […] The caretaker had been his wife. And she had done it in silence, without fireworks or slogans or declarations, without medals of honor and victory torches" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 232). Thus, Khalifeh personifies Umm Suad in this context, portraying her as an individual vulnerable to masculine maltreatment and patriarchal needs.

The husband of Umm Suad is a resistance and freedom fighter who undergoes metamorphosis while in prison. His absence opens the doors for Umm Suad's self-esteem and self-reliance to grow. She states that "[…] the Jews came along to spare her […]" by taking the "[…] prize rooster […]" – to the jail (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 177). Her initial reaction to his absence is intense anxiety and deep sadness, but she eventually develops the ability to manage the situation and fulfill the financial obligations that have been imposed upon her: "She screamed and yelled and pulled out her hair, and then she got up on her feet and went to work" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 177). To earn enough money to support her family and herself, as well as to enable other women to do the same for their own families, Umm Suad sells her own jewelry to create a weaving workshop. Consequently, the Israeli occupation offers women chances for personal growth and financial autonomy, which in turn promotes increased confidence, independence, and reduced acceptance of dehumanization. As Umm Suad says, if her spouse were to verbally abuse her, she would bring "[…] the whole world crashing down on his head" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 178).

Taking the cliché of the woman as the motherland and reworking it, Khalifeh redefines the mother as a feminist-nationalist entrepreneur. Thus, the mother grows more complex and more conscious; she becomes a human. In contrast to the resistance poets' representation of masculinity and violence, Khalifeh does not employ the woman as a land symbol solely to illustrate the interdependence of particular values or to express particular feelings. Furthermore, she elucidates the ways in which the absence of males during the occupation broadened the sphere of women, which served to further their national resistance. The women in the book served as a symbol of all Palestinian women, supporting their families while their husbands were imprisoned and instilling a sense of nationality in their offspring, a move that should not be seen as anti-feminist.

The daughter of Umm Suad, Suad is 'serious', 'hardworking', and vehemently opposed to the Israeli occupation. She also identifies as a feminist, a fact that she may have inherited from her mother. Suad ultimately establishes herself as the daughter of her mother when, despite experiencing profound agony, she declines to partner with a brutish man who grapples with the societal expectations placed upon women.

> Whether he knew it or not, there was a doubt planted deep within his soul […] a woman was just a fling, a fleeting emotion […] she was a jinn who would sap his manhood and toss him aside. A woman was fire. A woman was a shadow. A woman was a horse, and he was the horseman (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 225).

Freudian psychology gives rise to the concept of the 'Madonna-whore complex', which asserts that women are both innocent virgins and teasing whores, perilous and submissive, submissive mules and domineering wenches (Angierski, 2014); therefore, we can solely attribute their conduct to their womanhood, or type. Here, Suad exposes the contradictory meanings associated with women. Suad demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the women's cause and her personal integrity by refusing to assume any stereotypical role, despite experiencing considerable emotional distress along the way. She declines a problematic marriage proposal in accordance with her mother's counsel. Suad isn't going to give in to a connection with insecure roots, whether it's with a man or with Israel. She also finds her father's claim that she requires a male to look after her ridiculous: "Just because her father had forgotten, or pretended to forget – should she? Who raised her? Who taught her everything? Who carried the whole family on her back, ran the workshop, looked after the neighbors during the incursions" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 232).

Suad recognizes and appreciates the unrecognized and silent efforts that her mother puts forth for the family and the national resistance. She also learns from her mother that marriage is not obligatory. It is challenging to agree with Amal Amireh's claim that dependence on the mother is anti-feminist within this particular framework, as mothers are the ones who teach feminism to their daughters. In addition to encouraging her daughter to turn down a troublesome marriage proposal, Umm Suad also teaches her to be patient and kind, which is in line with feminist philosophy and actually sets her apart from the stereotype of the narrow-minded, strong female character. She demonstrates her altruistic nature towards animals, concern for the environment, and role as an instructive maternal figure through her actions of cuddling puppies and remarking to a young Ahmad that "[…] we shouldn't pick flowers and uproot trees, and we should treat cats like human beings" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 78).

She continues, stating, "Of course the Jews are people" (Khalifeh, 2008, p. 79), emphasizing the importance of viewing Jews as human beings. Her kindness does not take away from her strength; in fact, it complements her beautifully. Thus, Suad, like her mother, engages in national resistance activities and espouses feminist principles. According to Khalifeh, both the raising of feminist children and the dissemination of feminist ideas depend heavily on the power of mothers. Thus, *The End of Spring*, unlike Amireh, views the motif of the motherland as multifaceted and feminist, rather than dehumanizing, objectifying, or reductionistic. Khalifeh showcases how the motif of the woman as land performs complex metaphorical work; it simultaneously recognizes and honors the invaluable contributions of women, particularly mothers, to Palestinian national project as well as establishes a connection between patriarchy and colonialism.

## Conclusion

Postcolonial ecofeminism is an influential analytical lens, a literary theory, and an essential practice with substantial explanatory scope. By skillfully employing a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective in *The End of Spring*, Sahar Khalifeh demonstrates that she is an author acutely aware of the complex dynamics of occupation, patriarchy, oppression, and marginalization and the connection between the Palestinian motherland and the mothers of Palestine. She illustrates how one's struggle may be the struggle of both, comparing the land and women as companions in conflict. Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* (2008) employs nature as a backdrop, thereby reinforcing the overarching postcolonial ecofeminist contention that the subjugation of nature and the subjugation of women under patriarchy and colonialism are inseparable.

This article examines the postcolonial ecofeminist ramifications of *The End of Spring* (2008) by Sahar Khalifa, a Palestinian nationalist and feminist. While not overtly postcolonial ecofeminist in nature, Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* exhibits a profound involvement with postcolonial ecofeminist and, more explicitly, feminist issues. By examining the structured binary way of thinking that devalues women and nature in comparison to men and culture, Khalifeh illustrates how the marginalization of women hampers nationalistic objectives in Palestine, where male-dominated and patricidal values hinder liberation. In the book, Khalifa challenges the conventionally male narrative of Palestinian resistance and independence. The book highlights the maternal and physical contributions made by women to Palestinian resistance movements and demonstrates how feminism, motherhood, and the idea of a motherland are all complementary and compatible. Khalifeh demonstrates how a mother may be a feminist child's creator as well as a nationalist resistance fighter, refusing to submit to colonial and patriarchal behavioral conventions. Khalifeh eventually argues for an appreciation of feminine existence that transcends the characterization of women solely based on their sexual and biological capacities. In doing so, she exposes her inclination towards postcolonial ecofeminism.

In order to restore Palestine for the mothers of Palestine, Khalifeh restructures the metaphor of woman as mother(land) in her novel *The End of Spring*, all the while resisting giving in to any idealized notion of the rural woman and her land. The female characters in the book, the mother-Umm Suad-and her daughter-Suad - are sophisticated ecofeminists and patriotic nationalists who have a voice and financial and emotional responsibilities to their family and country. They are also mothers who, instead of falling short of feminist expectations through their maternal behavior, inculcate love and patriotism in their children while simultaneously replicating feminist values. Khalifeh establishes a parallel between Palestine and women in order to illuminate their predicaments, victimization, and their increasing power; this establishes her as a postcolonial ecofeminist who challenges the notion that women do not gain from the colonial and masculine exploitation as they grow more resolute and stronger.

Survival, resilience, solidarity, and collective resistance are central concepts in a postcolonial ecofeminist interpretation. The tragic experiences of Palestinian women, which are influenced by both colonial and patriarchal structures, necessitate this form of collective resistance. In *The End of Spring*, female solidarity is depicted as a critical strategy for combating the Israeli and domestic oppression they encounter. Ecofeminism calls for an understanding of the strong connection between the subjugation of women and the oppression of the land. Within the Palestinian context, this complementary solidarity is frequently demonstrated through women’s acts of resistance, compassion for their land, and love and care for their community. The patriarchal and colonial structures are thus challenged by this collective resistance and solidarity.

A postcolonial ecofeminist reading of Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* shows how the novel critically analyzes the intertwining structures of colonialism and patriarchy in addition to offering a scathing depiction of the

suffering of Palestinian women. Through emphasizing the links between land exploitation and women's subordination, the book challenges readers to consider the ways in which these oppressive practices reinforce one another. The intersectionality of these structures in the Palestinian context generates a distinctive experience of survival and resistance, in which women, like their land, continue to endure while also resisting the forces that attempt to oppress them.

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