'Lacking' Home: A Lacanian Reading of Cross-Cultural Diasporic Fiction

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, my brothers, my wife and children.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis titled "*Lacking Home*: A Lacanian Reading of Cross-Cultural Diasporic Fiction" submitted for the degree of Ph. D. (English) to the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Literature, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan is my original research work and no part of it has been copied from any published source, except where otherwise acknowledged in the text. I further declare that this research work has not been submitted previously by me or by any other person at any other university, institution or organization.

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Abstract

This study is a cross-cultural Lacanian psychoanalytic exploration of diasporic loss of home focusing three works of diasporic fiction: *The Namesake* (2003) by an American writer of Indian Origins, Jhumpa Lahiri; *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) by Palestinian-American writer Susan Abulhawa; and *Americanah* (2013) by Nigerian-American writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The study suggests a close alliance between diasporic loss of home and Jacques Lacan's subject formation process.The central argument of the study is that home is a necessary but irreconcilable Lacanian *lack* of diaspora which is installed during their perpetual subjectivation process entailing three Oedipal 'moments of crisis' namely *frustration, privation and castration.* This lack of home induces an eternal diasporic desire to search for the lost *objet petit a* home— which I call homemaking or acculturation. However, this desire triggers diaspora's creativity, engaging them in various mundane cultural and social formations in search of a forever lost home, leading to their painfully rewarding yet provisional acculturation in the hostlands. In this way, the study challenges the established connotations of loss of home as a phenomenon requiring pathological treatment and justifies the nature of diasporic anxieties as manifestations of an ontological void which are impossible to cure, but viable to manage.

Keywords: Home, Diaspora, Lacan, Lack, Desire, Subjectivity, Acculturation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the proposed area of research and explains the important concepts underpinning this study. This includes a description of the notion of home and its loss and how it is perceived in various fields of study, particularly in psychoanalysis. This is followed by a synoptical description of the research problem, research objectives and questions, the rationale and the significance of this study. Afterwards, it introduces the selected works of fiction for this study and the rationale for their selection, gives a brief overview of the authors' biographies, their works and their contexts. Finally, a breakdown of the later chapters is provided at the end.

1.1. Defining Home

Home has remained an essential human pursuit ever since antiquity despite variations in its forms, structures and uses across different contexts and times. Yet despite a commonplace phenomenon, it resists any attempt to simplify its complexities with regard to its use and relevance. Owing to the rise of globalization and transnationalism where mobility is seen as a normality, home has become a "contested concept" (Easthope, 2004, p. 134), "slippery and elusive" (Boccagni, 2016, p. 2), whose meanings are continuously discussed, challenged and modified. Several researchers have sought to explore this vernacular notion, unearthing its complexities in different domains of scholarship and contexts (Badcock & Beer, 2000; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Coolen & Meesters, 2012; R. M. George, 1999; Hill, 2010; Mallett, 2004; Moore, 2000; Pink, 2004). Due to this proliferation, the notion has evolved into a complex web of intersecting concepts with disparate meanings and interpretations.

Primarily, home refers to a house, a concrete structure that offers a sense of security, belonging and rootedness. This house is located in a place which implies a correlation between being-in-place and being-at-home. Humans have a distinct relationship of "dwelling" with their habitats as opposed to animals: the latter use them for the mere purpose of shelter whereas the former 'dwell' in them. Dwelling in this sense means findings one's place in the world. Martin Heidegger (1971) stresses this significance of connection between people and places of their living by saying: "The manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan,* dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell . . . man is insofar as he dwells" (p. 145). In other words, dwelling and human beings are inextricably interconnected, and human existence is impossible without dwelling.

This understanding of home as a physical structure located in a place can serve as a starting point, yet it cannot offer a holistic idea of what home is. Empirical research has shown that any attempt to reduce home to a mere house would be to confine the possibilities of varying conceptualizations in psycho-social, political and cultural domains (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Nikos (1998) argues that "the ideal home is not just a house which offers shelter, or a repository that contains material objects...home is a place where personal and social meaning are grounded" (p. 2). In other words, it is the starting point of one's personal life where one's most intimate relationships are engendered and forged. It does not remain any ordinary place but a place where the 'I' belongs, and where it receives its meanings via various associations with various object-relations i.e the people and the objects, the places etc. A house on the other hand is devoid of these emotional and relational dimensions of home and its materiality transforms it into a home only via significant 'others' — family, friends, neighbors, the environment, the landscape and the animate and inanimate objects (Kennedy, 2014; Tolia-Kelly, 2004). In this sense, home transcends mere geography and becomes a socio-cultural and socio-spatial phenomena where its meanings are constantly negotiated and reproduced. The nature of these

relationships establishes feelings of belonging or estrangement, peace or violence (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

Beside its concreteness of a place, home is also conceived beyond the physical illustration of a house, as a "a state of mind" (Hill, 2010, p. 38), an "idea", "an imaginary" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006) and a "psychic home" (Kennedy, 2014, p. 12). Easthope (2004) asserts that "while homes may be located, it is not the location that is "home". Home is the fusion of a feeling "at home", sense of comfort, belonging, with a particular place" (p.136). Such a home is an internal structure of the mind, a 'sense' of home, which is entwined with human beings at all times and situations, in exile and adventures alike and promises security independent of the physical space one occupies.

In addition, there is a temporal dimension to home in which a home can be home at one moment but ceases to be home at another owing to the presence or absence of the requisite sense of security. Home in its physical, virtual, or psychical sense may or may not be a pleasant site due to insecurity or any other negative associations; by contrast, one may feel at home in a far-off dwelling. We may refer to our places of births as homes in the past but not to our current dwellings (see Brink, 1995). Or one may aspire to be at some other place in the future, because the present home of one's birth does not offer a feeling of being at home. In other words, the absence of a sense of security and shelter transforms home into an estranged place where one does not want to be. For instance, the feminist discourses usually refer to the abuse of women within the home spaces which induces a sense of being "homeless at home (Wardhaugh, 1999).

More recently, the nomadic nature of modern life has ushered in a redefinition of home necessitating a navigation into newer ways of exploring the notion. The rapid advancement in travel technology in the wake of globalization and transnationalism has resulted in people spending considerable amount of time in places traditionally thought as 'non-homes', i.e

airports, malls etc. Thus, home no more remains a fixed abode, "but rather a mobile, symbolic habitat, a performative way of life and of doing things in which one makes one's home while in movement" (Morley, 2000, p. 47).

These alterations in the quotidian connotations of home have changed it into a complex theoretical category, and a powerful analytical tool, loaded with personal, social, cultural, political, psychological, and emotional meanings, distinctively perceived and understood by individuals and societies. Further complications emerge due to its relevance to a plethora of associations i.e self, identity, family, relations, geography, nation and ethnicity etc. On the one hand, these expansions have opened up new avenues of scholarship and new agendas of analyses and are seen essential to conceptualize the complex dynamics of modern day mobilities. On the other hand, they have made home a convoluted and labyrinthine conceptual category provoking discomfort (Rapoport, 1995).

Under these conditions, a plausible approach for any study of home would be to demarcate its boundaries of understanding with regard to the concept(s) under analysis; else, there is greater danger of falling prey to the luring entanglements of home, not necessarily relevant. Therefore, among its diverse connotations, I limit this study to the psychoanalytic examination of diasporic loss of home as exemplified in diasporic fiction and its implications for diasporic subjectivities and acculturation. More specifically, my understanding of home stems from Jacques Lacan's concept of *lack* which is foundational to the construction of subjectivities by means of desire for the lost object, the *objet petit a.*

1.2.Home, Psychoanalysis and Migration

Home and its loss is a rarely discussed topic in psychoanalytic literature and there exist only incidental references to it in the works of various psychoanalytic thinkers (Seiden, 2009).. For instance, Freud's essay "the Uncanny" (1919) — "Das Unheimiliche" which in German

means 'unhomelike'— alludes to the concept of home and the desire for 'the familiar' attached to it; however, his primary focus was the 'scary' in the familiar. In Seiden's (2009) words, "he is not interested in home in and of itself. Nor have psychoanalysts since been particularly interested" (p. 197).

With regard to migration and displacement, the psychoanalytic literature on home and its loss is also not extensive (Boulanger, 2004; Kennedy, 2014; Seiden, 2009) and there only exist a handful of studies that deal with home and the psychic consequences of its loss for migrants in pre, during and post migration times (Ainslie et al., 2013; Akhtar, 1995, 1999, 2011; Beltsiou, 2016; Boulanger, 2004; González, 2016; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Harlem, 2010; White & Klingenberg, 2021). Predominantly, the central psychoanalytic concept of mother-child split is extended, albeit with disparate theorization, to the separation of a migrant from the motherland (Akhtar, 1995, 1999, 2011; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). For instance, in his analysis of the psychodynamics of migration, Akhtar (1995) argues that "the familiar environment, climate and landscape are all unconsciously perceived as extensions of the mother"(p. 1062). In other words, the mother as a primordial other subsumes various others as the child grows. Grinberg & Grinberg (1984) consider a child's psychic development as a metaphorical "succession of migrations by means of which the individual progressively moves away from his first objects" (p. 15).

These views evidently manifest the constitutive nature of home and its role in the formation of human and by extension, diasporic subjectivities. In fact, the idea of home as constitutive of human subjectivities is well established in research (González Rey, 2017; Holton, 2016; Malpas, 2018; Pandurang, 2017; Papadopoulos, 2002; Venn, 2010) where it is seen as an incarnation of various primary others — the people, the objects, the places etc. The term subjectivity in this context is often used interchangeably with the notion of self, and identity to denote consciousness and agency on the part of an individual by means of which

he/she is differentiated from others. In other words, it refers to an individual's positioning in the socio-cultural world with regard to a number of comparative categories i.e ethnicity, gender, education, birthplace, religion, nationality etc. My use of the term subjectivity, however, is not coterminous with identity and derives from Lacan's complex differentiation in the Mirror Image Stage and the Subjectivation process. Identity or self in Lacanian lexicon is a mask of the ego whereas subjectivity is a property of the subject which itself is a fleeting speech event revealed in the process of signification (see chapter 3 for details). However, I consider both the terms as processes rather than products, ethereal and forever incomplete, "constantly negotiated and almost always in the process of becoming" (Hook, 2017; Hook & Neill, 2008).

When such a fundamentally constitutive home is lost in displacement, it is not experienced as a mere loss of an object but of a whole repertoire of cognates associated with it: of familiar landscape, people, places, objects, architectures, smells, foods, tastes and sounds (Ainslie et al., 2013; Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Tsuda, 2018) which is certain to trigger a subjective turmoil and a disruption in diasporic subjectivities (González Rey, 2017; Holton, 2016; Papadopoulos, 2002). Corroborating this view, Papadopoulos (2002) argues that displacement shatters human subjectivity by disrupting their rudimentary sense of home which in turn causes "a deep sense of a gap, a fissure, a hole, an absence, a lack of confidence in one's own existence" (p. 18). Similarly, Akhtar (1999) views migration as "a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home" (p. 341). These explorations have conferred negative connotations to the idea of loss of home in migration which serves as a mantra for various subsequent studies of migration. For instance, Francisco González (2016) argues that migration predominantly has been seen "largely as a psychologically damaging process, a traumatic event that poses unprecedented difficulties and usually leaves irremediable scars in its subjects" (p. 15).

Among the earliest psychoanalytic studies dealing with the effects of migration, León and Rebeca Grinberg in their ground-breaking work, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1989) propound that every dislocation experience entails traumatic elements and calamitous changes exposing migrants to a phase of disorientation and disorder, coupled with suffering, pain and anxiety. Migrants experience loss of social and communal lives, of relationships, the known environment and landscapes and their language which lead to states of regression. White & Klingenberg (2021) argue that this loss in turn ruptures the symbiotic bond between the self and the environment which, developed in infancy via coexistence of compatible feelings, is retained even after the maturation of personality structures "as unconscious memory traces [which] are sustained and defended against by projection into the environment" (p. 92). The self becomes dependent on this safe and harmonious environment. When displacement robs the migrant of this environment, the symbiotic bond is torn apart disturbing the subject's psychic world, leading to a sense of instability and the primitive state of regression. For most of the migrants, a deep sense of internal damage sets in as it is hard for them to grasp the changed environment. The situation further aggravates when migrant observes a strange and upsetting surround. The two shocks together — the loss of the old and encounter with the new — lead to discomfort, anxiety and disorientation because the ego fails to recognize and reconcile with the unfamiliar environment. Resultantly, many migrants experience this loss as a loss of self.

Several scholars have studied migration and its impact from the perspective of mourning (Ainslie, 2014; Akhtar, 2011; Munos, 2013; Volkan, 2017). The irradicable scars left on the psyche of migrants due to various heartbreaking losses and fractured identities cause extreme stress and activate the defense mechanism of mourning — which at times can be very agonizing — to safeguard from the crisis of disillusionment and loss of meaning. Mourning is a typical psychoanalytic response to such an experience of loss, and to every other loss, that

makes the pain of migration psychologically bearable. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957b), Freud describes mourning as:

> regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on . . . although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition (p. 243).

In other words, mourning refers to a set of conscious and unconscious processes which are activated upon the loss of a cathected object— in this case, home. The initial stage involves acute pain followed by a refusal to accept the reality of the loss and a phantasmatic presence of the lost object. After certain period of time, this gives way to the acknowledgement of the loss and a move towards new associations with new objects. The lost object is set apart, though may not be fully, and life returns to normal. However, Freud further describes a condition of *melancholia* in which separation from the lost object is not possible. He says, "in some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of a pathological disposition" (p. 243). Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia (or impossible mourning) is significant in a diasporic context in which mourning the loss of home is considered a normal and natural process which does not require any treatment; conversely, melancholia refers to a state of inability in conceding the reality of the loss of home and thus is pathological.

Another most extensively used framework for the study of migration and migrants' psychology is the concept of trauma (Caruth, 1996; S. George, 2016; Hamburger et al., 2019; Kogan, 2012; Volkan, 2017; Wilson & Drozdek, 2004). Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003) describes trauma as a psychic break in our mind's capacity to cope with some of our life experience, especially those that involve violence and terror, i.e displacement. Trauma can not only affect individuals but also various migrant groups or communities. It

engenders dissociation or chaos long after the passing of the traumatic event which manifest themselves in the form of apparent (such as silence, destructive behaviour) or disguised symptoms. The affectees of trauma may experience a disruption in their relationships i.e with the family, the home, the culture, or with their past, present and future, in short, in their subjectivities. Jan Holton in her book *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and Postures of Hospitality* (2016) has investigated the psychological (and theological) aspects of forced displacements on four different groups of displaced people namely a tribe in Batwa (Uganda), internally displaced people (IDPS) in Congo and Sudan, American soldiers who have returned from war with post-traumatic stress disorder, and homeless of the US. She concludes that displacement and loss of home involve significant repercussions for the social, psychological spiritual upbringing of the displaced populations. Likewise, Renos Papadopoulos (2002) has outlined new ways of understanding refugees' trauma-ridden lives and has suggested ways of therapeutic care for them. Another meaningful contribution is Cathy Caruth's (2016) *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* which provides various critical frameworks for the examination of narratives of trauma, especially from the perspective of psychoanalytic and literary theories. While examining works from various psychoanalysts, filmmakers and philosophers, including Freud and Lacan, she argues that the texts "stubbornly persist in bearing witness to some forgotten wound" (p. 5) when the experience of trauma itself remains enigmatic. These explorations essentially reveal trauma as a key framework of analysis of losses, such as displacement which continues to reign supreme in the contemporary scholarship.

Contrary to these explorations, new and positive ways of looking at diasporic loss of home have emerged on the scholarly landscape. The emergence and rise of trans-national and trans-cultural discourses have caused radical shifts in the way the diasporic condition is perceived and understood (Rubenstein, 2001). Mobility and diasporic living have become the

major influences of 21st century and swathes of migrants leave their homes every day and cross their borders to enter new lands. Correspondingly, regardless of loss of home as disruptive of subjectivities, the diasporic condition is seen as "a variable potential for retaining, reproducing, or recreating the home experience anew" (Boccagni, 2016, p. 18) whereby systematic attempts are made to revive and reconstruct the past. Resultantly, the focus of analyses has shifted towards diaspora's engagement with the new challenges of (un)homemaking, of (de)construction of identities and of searching new means of existence. Questions of how diaspora incorporate the antilogies and paradoxes, of past and present, of homeland and hostland — a process of homemaking or acculturation which, I argue, is synonymous with *Subjectivation*— have become central. The general perception is that "displacement goes along with at least some replacement" (p. 18), by means of which the existential conditions of diaspora change, impelling a confrontation and then a settlement with the new world where their identities are intermittently renegotiated. The psychic and social health of these migrants as well as the societies of their living depend heavily on the former's responses to these challenges.

1.3. The Argument

These radical shifts in the meaning of home necessitate psychoanalytic explorations of the subject to tend to the positive aspects of loss of home; however, despite the availability of a gradually growing repertoire of paradigms to examine the migratory processes and their countless intersecting components (Beltsiou, 2016; White & Klingenberg, 2021), the psychoanalytic analyses have largely been overshadowed by negative portrayals of the phenomena, mainly delineating migration anxieties and pathological conditions (Akhtar, 2011; Volkan, 2017). The morbid descriptions of the loss of home have generated a psychoanalytic scholarship that views diasporic migrations as symptomatic of numerous pathologies,

accordingly asking for various remedies to cure the diasporic 'patients'. Entrapped in these tropes of unhappiness, the persona of diasporic migrant exists as a miserable and melancholy figure, a 'perennial mourner' (Volkan, 2009, 2017), always in search of a lost home. Accordingly, the focus of representations in diasporic fiction and its scholarly analyses has largely been on the negative connotations of loss of home, oftentimes discussed in relation to dislocation, alienation, homelessness, nostalgia, identity crisis, hybridity etc (Mishra, 2007). These trauma-ridden accounts of loss of home are in fact reductionist that offer partial and often skeptic explanations. Marred with stock interpretations made popular in the past few decades, they have failed to apprehend the exuberance and energy of life in the modern day pluri-cultural and transnational societies which have eventuated after the painful, yet rewarding movements of peoples across different borders and cultures. The horrors of migration aside, their skewed over-emphasis has culminated in lopsided analyses of loss of home, rendering its positivity trivialized and undervalued. Resultantly, there is a dire need for a positive and systematic theorizing of loss of home in migration in order to explore "what immigration produces, how it generates and creates" (González, 2016, p. 15).

In order to bridge this gap, this study offers an alternative approach to the exploration of loss of home and its relationship with the prospects of creative *homemaking* or acculturation in the hostlands. By drawing on Jacques Lacan's concept of *lack* as a framework of analysis, it aims to unravel the complex undertones of home and its potential for the analysis of a 'forever incomplete' diasporic subjectivity in the selected diasporic fiction.

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To identify the parallels between diasporic displacement (and loss of home) and Jacques Lacan's subjectivation process.

2. To examine the manifestations of Lacanian lack within the characters' desire for home in the selected novels.
3. To analyze how the diasporic lack of home functions as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, leading to an unending desire for homemaking or acculturation within diaspora.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How is diasporic displacement (and loss of home) synonymous to Jacques Lacan's subjectivation process?
2. How do the selected novels manifest the Lacanian lack in their character's desire for home?
3. How does the diasporic lack of home act as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, resulting in a perpetual desire for homemaking or acculturation?

The main argument of this study is that home is a Lacanian *lack* of diaspora, a forever lost object of desire or an *objet petit a,* engendered in the process of splitting from the mother(land) which always remains beyond their reach. Such a conceptualization of home downplays its physical features and magnifies the imaginative or phantasmatic aspects of home. The study further argues that diasporic displacement is synonymous with Lacanian subject's splitting from the mother by means of *subjectivation* or subject formation process. The approach recognizes: the constitutive role of home for human, and by extension, diasporic subjectivities, its loss as a serious disruption in the latter, and its capacity for the innumerable and inevitable future re-constitutions of diasporic subjectivities as stated in migration research (Carling & Collins, 2018; Venn, 2010); however, unlike previous (psychoanalytic) studies of migration, it situates the reconstitution of diasporic subjectivities in Lacan's *subjectivation* process, that is, his three Oedipal 'moments of crisis' namely *frustration, privation* and

castration. The process produces always-in-the-making diasporic subjects, marked with a necessary and irreconcilable *lack of home* — a substitute for the primary ontological loss. Out of the subject's lack emerges a desire to find the lost home but it is bound to fail due to the irreducible nature of lack; therefore, the torments of loss of home persist in diaspora, instigating a perpetual cycle of diasporic longing. In this sense, human and thereby diasporic subjectivity is in a forever state of 'becoming' and is unceasingly constructed and deconstructed, deferring its destination. Like a restless signifier in the chain of signification, the subject traverses the interstices of various cultures, and continually situates its home in the inter-subjective and transcultural dialogues.

Based on the argument above, the study further argues that this diasporic lack of home functions as a crucible of creativity by inducing a perpetual desire for homemaking or acculturation, by means of which diaspora create various day-to-day cultural and social forms of living, leading to their painfully rewarding yet provisional acculturation in the hostlands. Here, drawing on the characteristic potential of home as constitutive of subjectivity, I use Lacanian subjectivation coterminously with homemaking and acculturation since they are the processes that produce human/diasporic subjectivities. Further, the term homemaking or acculturation allude to the mundane practices of adjustment in the hostland, or to the post-migratory experience of creating a sense of 'being at home' in the world. Contrary to the general negative connotations of loss of home, these *homemaking* practices involve processes of de-synthesizing and re-synthesizing, of blending and un-blending various cultural formations to produce newer configurations. The study examines diasporic texts from three different diasporic authors and locations and attempts to discover the impact of various contextual factors on the process of subjectivation and homemaking. During the course of analysis, Lacan's notions of *jouissance* and *fantasy* have also been brought under discussion due to their central role in the subjectivation process.

The study concludes that the idea of home as a Lacanian lack, paired with perpetually incomplete subjectivity, disrupts the established connotations of loss of home as a traumatic experience requiring pathological treatment. It justifies the nature of diasporic anxieties as manifestations of an ontological void which are impossible to cure, but viable to manage. Alternatively, it suggests a move towards a transnationally inclusive world where micro acts of creativity help solidify relationships among various home and host communities. In this way, it anticipates fundamental changes in human psyche that lead to wider debates in scholarship with regard to the future of the world as a better place of living, despite the inevitability and incongruity of human lacks.

1.6. Rationale

The important question to consider is why write on diasporic loss of home when there already exist vast literatures on this topic in a wide variety of domains. The primary reason lies in the conventional scholarship's consideration and portrayal of loss of home as a negative phenomenon due to the trauma and suffering inherent in the process of migration. Although modern discourses of transnationalism point towards the possibilities that emerge out of this loss, their focus often remains on the factors external to diaspora, setting aside significant aspects of diasporic psyche. Further, within psychoanalytic scholarship, there is a greater degree of silence on the positive aspects of migration despite the availability of literatures in social, cultural and postcolonial theories. The inevitability of migratory experiences today due to globalization and the unprecedented psychic implications demand a psychoanalytically well-informed approach to handle the crises of the process, not avoid them, or complain about them. What is unique to Lacanian psychoanalysis is that it offers a theory of the subject which allows a consideration of the experience of loss of home as a foundamental human *lack*, rooted in primordial loss or split from the mother. The necessity and impossibility of fulfilling this lack

engages diaspora in an endlessly cyclical process of losing and reconstructing homes, and thereby their subjectivities. In this way, it renders a new understanding of displacement based on Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis, enabling diaspora to deal with the incongruities of their lives in the hostlands. In other words, Lacanian psychoanalysis functions as a science of living and offers an antidote in order to make life better and healthier in the hugely inharmonious new worlds of diaspora.

Lacan's concept of *lack* as analytical tool for the analysis of diasporic fiction and the genesis of creativity is a challenging domain. Such a choice can be slippery owing to the challenge of finding conciliatory grounds between two apparently different domains of study: psychoanalysis and literature. However, by exploring the rich repertoire of psychoanalytic texts, it can be easily discovered that literature has remained an important instrument of psychoanalytic explorations, beginning from Freud and continuing until today. In fact, certain fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis i.e the Oedipus Complex, are named after literary figures. Further, a number of works are available which utilize literary texts as their primary source of psychoanalytic explication (Camden, 2021; Parkin-Gounelas, 2017; Rabaté, 2014). Interestingly, Lacan himself developed many of his psychoanalytic concepts by drawing on the works of various literary authors, both ancient and modern, including Sophocles, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, James Joyce, Edger Allan Poe, Marquis de Sade, Jean-Paul Sartre to name a few. Among these, some of the literary works and authors find greater space in his seminars: Sophocles' *Antigone* (Seminar VII), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Seminar VI), Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (Seminar II, XVIII and Écrits), and James Joyce (Seminar XXIII). In addition to these readings, he delivered a seminar on the notion of *lituraterre*, putting forward his intricately complex theory of psychoanalytic literary criticism which was later included in Seminar XVIII and also published posthumously in *Other Writings* (Autres écrits) (Lacan, 2001). In coining the word *lituraterre*, Lacan alludes to how "literature consists of holes and erasures" (Rabaté,

2001, p. 33), the un-symbolizable bits of the Real and the job of a psychoanalytic critic is to uncover these holes. In *Ecrits* (Lacan, 2006), Lacan clearly asserts the significance of literary texts for psychoanalytic technique by saying, "to be taught and to be learned, this technique [psychoanalysis] would require a profound assimilation of the resources of a language \langue\ especially those that are concretely realized in its poetic texts. (p. 244). Several scholars have attempted to build on this relationship between literature and Lacanian psychoanalysis and have offered comprehensive commentaries on various literary texts (Azari, 2008; Biswas, 2012; Rabaté, 2001). They have exemplified how Lacanian insights can be advantageous to the critique of literature and how literature can be used to elaborate and advance Lacan's categories of lack, desire, jouissance, neurosis, psychosis, perversion etc.

The application of Lacanian psychoanalysis on the selected diasporic texts allows an exploration into diasporic desires and traumas by means of which a psychic understanding of diasporic loss of home can be established. The novels, beside their thematical and stylistic excellence, skillfully represent diasporic movements within and between countries and the resultant incessant fragmentation of their characters' subjectivities which invoke a never-ending search for the impossible and elusive home. The juxtaposition of these diverse diasporic texts on a Lacanian scale unravels their points of intersection and divergence and offers a unique framework of ideas that can vitally revive our understanding about numerous cultural, social and political instantiations of diaspora and home. The geographical and cultural diversities and the disparate impetuses for migration in the selected novels pose a challenge of convergence; however, Lacanian psychoanalysis allows points of confluence based on its universal principles concerning human subjectivities, helping me to transform such divergent categories into an interesting and unique kind of study. This universality of approach allows a foregrounding of commonalities of migration at the psychic level in different contexts, particularly with regard to the formation of human and diasporic subjectivities. However, the

approach also sanctions insights into the ensuing differences of diaspora due to their engagement with different cultural and political forces within their contexts. In other words, this approach considers the existence of shared psychological processes fundamental to human behavior in cross-cultural diasporic settings which are continuously fashioned by cultural and political forces during their evolutionary stages.

1.7. Significance of the Study

A Lacanian approach to diasporic loss of home, rooted in lack and desire, is distinct in many ways. It intends to enhance our understanding of the migratory experiences, especially with regard to the inconsonant nature of the homeland and hostland, their similarities and differences, and the practices of homemaking or acculturation in the post migration period. By situating diasporic subjectivity in the framework of Lacanian theory and the subjectivation process of lack and desire, the study emphasizes a shift of focus towards discovering the psychic route of diasporic subjectivation and the creativity latent in lack whose prudent negotiation helps diaspora in acculturation, paired with an understanding of the irreconcilable instabilities and insecurities of their 'being'. This helps diaspora face the challenges of their in-between life as they grapple with various losses and identify what contributes to their integrative efforts. In addition, it also challenges the established myths of displacement as a disease demanding cure and rationalizes the presence of a ceaseless diasporic desire for home. By doing this, it peels off the negative coating heaped on the study of migration over the years and while not underestimating the horrors of forced and violent migrations, it simultaneously attempts to set the study of migration in a new and positive direction wherein lie diasporic genius and a panacea to diasporic problems.

1.8. The Texts, the Contexts and the Authors

For the purpose of this study, I have selected three texts from different geographies and cultures: *The Namesake* (2006) by Jhumpa Lahiri (India), *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria) and *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) by Susan Abulhawa (Palestine) which allows an exploration into the dynamics of migration in three distinct settings. However, my analysis is not focused on the biographies of the writers but on the characters and the narrative events of their stories. While migration to America is a common feature of these novels, the factors causing these migrations vary. This allows for a comparative analysis of the factors driving migration and the ensuing cultural and identity shifts in the characters' lives. Moreover, the novels have been selected for representing distinct natures of migration. *The Namesake* presents a voluntary migration originating from the need for better life; *Americanah* delineates partially forced migration due to political instability in Nigeria and the pervasive corruption mainly in academic settings. *Morning in Jenin*, on the other hand, portrays forced migration in the wake of Israeli occupation of Palestine. Regardless of the voluntary and involuntary nature of displacement, the latter leaves its marks on all diaspora, "not only those who are clearly traumatised, who carry losses and broken identities within themselves, but also those with apparently successful lives" (Huff-Müller, 2020, p. 46). What this indicates, contrary to popular belief, is that voluntary migrants—who often leave their homelands not for fear of violence or insecurity but for better lifestyles— do reveal pathological symptoms during their encounters with various moments of crises in their lives.

In order to grapple with the contextual and cultural nuances of the diaspora under discussion, I have detailed each diasporic context below to build a solid foundation for my analysis in the later chapters. Juxtaposing these disparate categories will lay bare their points of intersection and departure.

1.8.1. India and Indian Diaspora

The Republic of India is located in South Asia and is the largest in terms of size and population in the region. It is home to heterogeneously diverse multi-ethnic communities with their distinct cultures, languages, and social practices. Historically, the country has been ruled by various monarchies and dynasties and has remained a battle ground for countless relentless invaders. It came under the British rule in 1857 from which it obtained its freedom in 1947 after the partition of sub-continent, an event marked with unprecedented histories of violence and bloodshed.

After the British and the Chinese, the 3rd largest diaspora in the world is the Indian diaspora (Hegde & Sahoo, 2018). The earliest displacements were made for the purposes of trade and religious propagation. From 9th to 13th century, India gradually became a business hub and a nodal point for trade across different countries, mainly China. It came under British colonialism in 1857 whose imperialist agenda was largely reliant on the dispersal and control of its subjects. India became a treasure house of resources and an embodiment of colonial power from which Britain drew great luxuries and wealth. The Indians fulfilled the British Empire's labor needs in various skill areas i.e farmers, soldiers, plantation workers etc; however, the most significant among these was the indentured labor — a form of slavery — in which crowds of Indians were transported to various parts of the world, to maintain and sustain the colonizer's economy by providing cheap labor. Brown (2007) notes:

> India was at the heart of this deepening global interconnection, and became increasingly significant for Britain as a source of raw materials, as [a] market for manufactured goods, a destination for capital investment, and a source of labour for other parts of the Empire. (p. 14)

The post-colonial era after the Independence in 1947 brought a shift in the movement patterns and purposes; the labor needs no more remained central; thus the dynamics of mobility for the Indians shifted to more skilled people and professionals moving towards the developed

Western countries for better jobs and life styles. The growth of international markets also triggered the movement of Indians from former colonies to the economic hubs like Australia, the Gulf countries and the Western states. Today, more than 25 million Indian aborigines live in various regions of the world, interconnected via their mutual characteristics of Indianness. Hegde & Sahoo (2018) assert:

> The geographical diversity of the Indian diaspora has been shaped against the backdrop of the historical forces of colonialism, nationalism and neoliberal globalization. In each of these global conjunctures, the demand for workers has led the Indian diaspora to various locations, each with its particular sets of challenges. This in turn, has created a multiplicity of diasporic experiences, cultures and practices. (p. 1)

1.8.2. Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri (1967-present) is an American writer, born in London to parents of Bengali Indian ancestry. At the age of three, her family moved to Rhodes Island, America where she completed her education before getting married and moving to Rome, Italy. She is the author of two short story collections: *Interpreter of Maladies (1999)* and *Unaccustomed Earth (2008),* and two novels in English : *The Namesake (2003)* (included in this study), and *The Lowland (2013*). Beside these, she has written a novel *Dove me trovo* (2018) in Italian and is the author of many other essays, both in English and Italian. She has won many awards for her writing including Pulitzer Prize for fiction and National Humanities Medal.

Lahiri's stories draw form her own experience of being an immigrant who is born and raised in different diasporic contexts. Her works majorly deal with the themes of migration, first and second-generation diaspora, identity and trans-culturalism. The characters, mostly Indian-Americans, are caught between the two discordant worlds of homeland and hostland where they attempt to acknowledge the significance of their past and their home. They undergo

the toils of preserving their heritage and culture in the midst of growing demands of assimilation from the host societies. There is an interesting interplay of intricate human relationships and their (traumatic) experiences of dislocation. Munos (2013) argues that "by and large, Lahiri's work appears to be buried alive beneath the immovable stone of 'hybridity talk'' (p. xiv).

1.8.3. Nigeria and Nigerian Diaspora

Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous country of West Africa. It comprises of 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory and is home to a wide variety of cultures, languages and ethnicities—the prominent among them are Hausa–Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo in the north, west, and east of the country respectively. The two regions of Nigeria, North and South containing diverse mix of various ethnic, linguistic and religious groups were forcefully unified in 1914 under the British colonial administrator Sir Frederick Lugard, the last Governor General of Northern Nigeria.

Eventually, the country gained its freedom in 1960 after a 59 years struggle for independence from the British colonial rule and adopted its own constitution in 1963. The city of Abuja was named as the Federal Capital Territory whereas the city of Lagos became the cosmopolitan hub. Since then, Nigeria has witnessed various social, political and military conspiracies owing to the disparities of its heterogenous population including the brutal Civil War of 1967-70. This was followed by 33 years (1966-1999) of military rule during which political unrest and instability reigned the country. The country eventually became a democracy in 1999.

Nigerian diaspora forms the largest group of migrants from Africa. The dispersal of people can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, especially the trans-Saharan trade between 14th and 16th centuries. The colonial enterprise and trans-Atlantic slave trade caused mass

movements from Africa to the Americas. Large scale migrations for mining and plantations took place to various African countries as well as to the New World. After the independence, the Nigerian populations continued their movements to the UK and the USA, mainly for better job opportunities and higher education purposes. Today, Nigerian diaspora comprises a diverse mix of faiths, occupations, genders and ethnicities. The racist and xenophobic encounters in the host societies have helped Nigerian migrants form multi-ethnic, pluri-local communities which all share a bond of belonging to Nigeria. These formulations have generated trans-national connections between and across communities scattered around the world whose echoes can be sensed in their cultural productions i.e literature, films, music etc. Feldner (2019) notes that the two major domains of focus in Nigerian literature are diasporic experiences and representation of Nigeria. In this sense, "Nigerian diaspora literature is therefore positioned in a field of tension whose outer poles can be described as transnational/transcultural hybridity and national identity" (p. 2).

1.8.4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977-date), is a Nigerian writer born to the affectees of Nigerian Civil War. Her father was a university professor whereas her mother was a registrar. She received her schooling in Nigeria and then moved to America at the age of 19 to complete her education and begin her career as a writer. She received Master degrees from John Hopkins and Yale Universities in Creative Writing and African Studies respectively. Adichie is a prolific writer and has written a number of works, many of which have received international accolades and awards. These include novels like: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), and short stories: *The Young Around Your Neck* (2009) and many other works of fiction and non-fiction.

Adichie's writing is autobiographical which interweaves details of her own life into the fabric of her narratives. The main themes of her stories include Nigerian culture, matters pertaining to race and identity, politics, the challenges of displacement and acculturation in a white-privileged society etc. The stories reveal dynamic spins of African diaspora experience in the West where her characters' struggle against the hegemony of white racist discourses. Their black skin and the stigma of being African necessitate faking their identities by anglicizing their name and their accent in order to blend into the system and become acceptable.

1.8.5. Palestine and Palestinian Diaspora

Palestine was originally a province in the Roman period which later came under the rule of Byzantine Empire that lasted until Islam gained prominence in the 7th century. The area then transformed into largely Arab and Muslim population with some Christian and Jewish minorities still inhabiting the place. The history of Palestinian-Israel conflict dates back to the establishment of a European Zionist movement which sought to lay the foundations of a Jewish homeland (Matar, 2010, p. 23), in reaction to the growing anti-Semitism against the Jewish population across Europe and bring scattered Jews in the 'chosen land' of Palestine historically promised to them (Farsoun, 2005). The resultant establishment of Israel in 1948 as a state marks a significant turn in the lives of Palestinians when words like *al-Nakbah* (disaster) and *al-ghurba* (exile) came to be part of their vocabulary. During that time, approximately 750000 Palestinians were displaced as refugees (Bunton, 2013; Peteet, 2007) to live their lives in exile, scattered within Palestine as internally displaced people, and in refugee camps of different parts of the world. Hammer (2009) identifies four distinct categories of Palestinian diaspora i.e living in Gaza and the West Bank, in Arab countries, in Israel, and in Western countries (p. 14). She asserts that these Palestinians are different due to their diverse habitats and identities,

yet "Palestine as a symbolic, imagined, and real homeland is central to Palestinian self-definitions" (p. 221).

In contrast to other dispersed communities, Palestinians have been dislocated several times, from camps to the neighboring countries and then further displaced as a result of wars; therefore, their displacement is not a one-time phenomenon but an iterative occurrence. Further, the experience of dislocation extends across generations in which, despite the absence of a lived experience, the second and even subsequent displaced generations consider Palestine central to their concept of identity and belonging (Mason, 2007). Interestingly, Hammers (2009) argues that the first and second generations have a different understanding of the idea of Palestine as home since the former's is constructed through memory and the latter's through imagination; she classifies them as cultural and imagined national homeland respectively, or "al-balad on the one hand, and al-watan, on the other" (p. 221).

An important notion in Palestinian consciousness is the right to return (Peteet, 2007). Principally, Palestinians scattered in different corners of the world maintain a deeply rooted idea of (imaginary or real) return to their stolen land. Hammer (2009) propounds that "the image of a homeland to which to return from exile shaped the expectations of Palestinians in the diaspora countries and was thus a defining factor for the possible return experience itself" (p. 221). Similarly, Mason (2007) argues that most of the Palestinians, especially the first generations who personally experienced 1948's dislocation, have lived a liminal life, hoping for the return to Palestine. In the early days of dislocation after the *Al-Nakbah*, life in refugee camps glimmered with a hope of return one day whose intensity hindered their chances of adjustment in the temporary settlements. With the passage of time, the hope of return shimmered; but the idea has been generationally transferred, passed on to the forthcoming generations. In fact, some researchers find it surprising to hear the subsequent generations of Palestinians tracing their roots to the villages from where their ancestors were originally

displaced, despite the fact that those villages have long since been annihilated, and are existent merely in memories (Doraï, 2002). This clearly suggests that the later generations of Palestinians do not regard their temporary settlements or refugee camps as their homes despite the longevity of time spent there and still long to return.

1.8.6. Susan Abulhawa

Susan Abulhawa (1970—date) is a Palestinian American writer, born in Kuwait to Palestinian refugees of the 1967 war. Her childhood is spent in refugee camps and in an Jerusalem orphanage after which she moved to America to study medicine. She became a UN observer and was sent to the occupied territories whose experiences enriched her narratives. For instance, *Mornings in Jenin* is written in reaction to the 2002 attack on Jenin refugee camp by Israel. Her works include *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), *The Blue Between Sky* and *Water* (2015) *and Against the Loveless World* (2020).

Abulhawa's narratives revolve around the themes of loss of home and identity in Palestinian context, trauma of dislocation and its trans-generational transfer through memory and narratives. As a literary writer, she believes that there is a certain lack of awareness at the global level and perhaps misrepresentation about the history of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. She writes, "what Western media refer to as a conflict is, in fact, the destruction of an entire people; the erasure of their history; the removal of a distinct and named geographic and sociocultural space that has existed since early antiquity" (Abulhawa, 2015b).It is in this backdrop that her narrative attempt to bring the voice of Palestinians to the fore, in order to bridge the gap between the Arab and the West and to counter manipulation of facts about the Palestinian history and the systematic destruction of Palestinians.

1.9. Breakdown of Chapters

This study is divided into the following chapters.

Chapter 1, *Introduction* provides the background and context of the study by outlining the heterogenous meanings home and its loss in diasporic and non-diasporic contexts. It situates the study within a psychoanalytic framework and problematizes the representation of loss of home in diaspora and psychoanalysis. The chapter also provides rationale and significance of the study and briefly describes the selected texts, their authors and the contexts.

Chapter 2, *Loss of Home and Diasporic Fiction* surveys the existing literature for the representation of diasporic loss of home and the contributions made by various writers and researchers. It also reviews various frameworks of trans-generational transmission of psychic phenomena from the first generation to the subsequent generations to provide a foundation for my subsequent analysis in two of the novels.

Chapter 3, *Lacanian Subjectivation and Diasporic Lack of Home* presents a framework based on Jacques Lacan's concept of *lack* for the analysis of diasporic loss of home and acculturation in the selected diasporic fiction. There is detailed discussion on Lacan's complex schema including the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary registers, the Mirror Image Stage and the Oedipus Complex. The chapter also establishes a framework for the trans-generational transmission of lack of home from the first to the subsequent generations. The chapter then expands Lacan's schema to diasporic dislocations and how the creative aspect of Lacanian *lack* helps diaspora acculturate in the hostland via various micro and macro creative acts.

Chapter 4, *Lack of Home and Subjectivation in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake* examines loss of home from focusing on Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*. It describes the voluntary dislocation and shattering and reconstruction of diasporic subjectivities from a Bengali- Indian perspective. It also analyses the transmition of lacks parents to the second diasporic generation character Gogol.

Chapter 5 *Lack of Home and Subjectivation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah* deals with the investigation of loss of home from a Nigerian diasporic perspective in the novel *Americanah.* It explores the issues of diasporic experiences of dispersal from and return to homeland, encounters with institutionalized forms of racism in the hostland, and the consequent successes and failures of acculturation. The chapter situates forms of racism against the black people in Lacan's notion of *Jouissance* or the surplus libidinal enjoyment.

Chapter 6, *Lack of Home and Subjectivation in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* examines loss of home in a Palestinian context in the novel *Mornings in Jenin*, not only for the direct affectees of displacement, but also for their future generations. Displacement in this novel is not forced, unlike the previous two novels, and therefore the sense of loss is too profound. My examination also reveals the power of memories and narratives in carrying forward ancestral lacks to the future generations of the diaspora.

Chapter 7 juxtaposes the three novels in order to expose their similarities and differences. It compares and contrasts various aspects of diasporic displacements i.e the circumstances of displacement, the various cultural signifiers of lack of home and their role in determining the degree of homemaking or acculturation. By examining the intertextual relationships among the texts, it juxtaposes the varying notions of loss of home and provides profound insights into Lacan's notion of lack itself.

Chapter 8, *Conclusion*, provides the gist of my findings, the way home as *lack* structures diasporic subjectivities paving the way for their homemaking or acculturation, and transforming diaspora into transcultural citizens of the world. It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and suggests the manifold dimensions of Lacanian notion of lack (of home) for future researchers and gives the study a closure.

CHAPTER 2

LOSS OF HOME AND DIASPORIC FICTION

The study lies at the crossroads of diaspora theory and fiction, and psychoanalysis; therefore, it is necessary to outline their relationship at the very outset. This chapter presents an overview of these divergent fields of knowledge and highlights their points of confluence for the analysis of diasporic loss of home. First, the chapter outlines the manifold theoretical and literary understandings and representations of home and its loss in displacement by surveying various facets of diaspora theory and fiction. Second, the chapter examines psychoanalytic perspectives on the trans-generational transfer of diasporic loss of home for the subsequent generations of diaspora. In doing this, I explore the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok and the extension of their ideas by several other scholars like Ilany Kogan, Vijay Mishra etc. This provides a solid foundation for my subsequent theorizing of trans-generational transfer of lacks in chapter 3 and its implications for the selected works of fiction as detailed in chapter 4 and 6. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary and a lead-in to the next chapter.

2.1. Home and Literature

Since literature is concerned with the representation of life, the idea of home being one of the important facet of life finds an apropos rendering across the literary landscape. Its appearances are plenteous and kaleidoscopic, for instance, as a primordial need for shelter, a sense of belonging to a physical place of origin, a mythical idea and imaginary homeland, and a source of identity and self-construction. The following series of question from Allan Sealy's Trotter-Nama exemplifies the heterogenous nature of home that have perplexed scholars for centuries. He says:

She turned over the word home in her mind, slowly, deliberately, wondering what is concealed? ... Did it mean simply the place where things were the right side up and familiar-looking? ... Was home the place where one was born? Or the place where one hoped to bury one's bones? ... Was it simply where you happened to be at the moment? Or the place in your mind where you weren't? The place of your deepest sleep? The place of your waking dreams? ... Could you have two homes ... and come and go forever between them. (Sealy, 2019, p. 489)

Since antiquity, home has remained a major literary theme ranging from Homer to Shakespeare, and to James Joyce and beyond (D'Addario, 2007; Nyman, 2009). The earliest literary representations of home can be found in Homer's Odyssey which manifest it as an essential ingredient of human life for which all ordeals, like those of Odysseus, appear insignificant. Odysseus' quest for home, in fact, indicates a fundamental human desire for 'being at home'. Later literary authors, with the literature's agenda of reformation, have compared their home spaces and contexts with the imaginary and ideal worlds uncovering the former's deficiencies and provoking the masses to rectify them. Thomas More 's *Utopia*, the Oeuvre of Shakespeare, and the vast body of works by countless literary authors from antiquity to post-modernity effectively prove that literature has remained a site where home is written and re-written in different styles, genres, and contexts and at every instance, its meanings have been recreated within particular discourses surrounding the concept. To illustrate, Kingsley-Smith (2003) traces Shakespeare's use of exile and banishment at a "literal, figurative and symbolic level" by investigating his tragedies, histories, and tragi-comedies. She opines that dispersal from home is a recurrent motif in Shakespeare's plays which ranges from the " loss of language to loss of nation, from loss of the beloved to loss of self" (p. 2). Similarly, Rosemary Marangoly George (1999) asserts that homesickness or the absence of home is the

central theme of all literature which celebrates the friction between our desire to belong, to have a home and the failure to achieve it.

The constant appearance of home and its loss on the literary landscape has elevated its status and has made it a powerful object of contemplation for writers and theorists (Gairola, 2016; R. M. George, 1999). Literatures written under the ambit of post-colonialism, diasporic fiction, multi-culturalism, cosmopolitanism, and trans-nationalism attempt to understand and interpret the multifarious dimensions of home and its loss in harmony with their own boundaries and frameworks. From the literatures of trans-Atlantic slave trades to the literatures of indentured labors, and from the literatures of forced dispersals to the literatures of voluntary movements, the (dis)similitudes of diaspora's departures, the suffering and trauma of border crossings, the struggles to subsist in the in-between worlds of homeland and hostland, the processes of return or homecoming have remained some of the predominant themes of literary fiction. Helen Grice (2002) aptly captures the diverse literary understandings of home by saying that home is an inaccessible place to belong for diaspora writers, an 'imagined place' for postcolonial immigrants, a desire for assimilation in the host country by writers who are born there; "a mythologized location" for the third-generation migrants, a sanctuary for racial victims, and a "patriarchal place" and a "gendered zone" (p. 76).

2.2. Diaspora as a Concept

While home is important to a wide range of literary genres, it is intrinsic to diasporic fiction for being a constituent element of diaspora (Brubaker, 2005; Cohen, 2008; Feldner, 2019; Safran, 1991) where its inherent abstruseness and loss have elicited its disparate representations, literal as well as metaphoric. However, before surveying diasporic fiction to examine the various representations of home, it is essential to establish what diaspora stands for and how it relates to this study's design. Within the constraints of this study, only a

synoptical view of the concept can be provided since a unified and conclusive definition of such an encyclopedic term is beyond any possibility and would be unjust to the dynamism inherent in the concept. Therefore, I first present a succinct history of the concept, followed by various definitions and then arriving at my own which serves the purposes of this study.

The widespread use of the term diaspora has convoluted its meaning and has made it a confusing intellectual category with ambiguities emanating from an array of factors (Adachi, 2006; Brubaker, 2005; Butler, 2001; Cohen & Fischer, 2018; Faist, 2010; Safran, 1991; Tsuda, 2018). These disputes have triggered debates in the scholarly circles with regard to the definition, use and relevance of the term, making it difficult to arrive at a conclusion. In addition, the cluster of terminologies—oftentimes used interchangeably by various scholars i.e diaspora, exile, refugees, immigrants, migrants etc (Tölölyan, 1991) — has further camouflaged the concept due to a huge degree of overlap in their meanings. In the wake of definitional controversies, several researchers have tried to limit such a mushrooming of the term, but the attempts have resulted in further complications (Cohen & Fischer, 2018). However, the discussions and outcomes have been productive as they have helped identify overlapping and unique characteristics of the various diasporas.

The origins of the word diaspora lie in Greek–dia which means 'through', and speirein, which means 'to scatter' (Brah, 2005, p. 15); therefore, the term is denotative of people dislocated from their homeland suggesting an idea of dispersal and fragmentation. However, Dufoix (2018) discovers the first use of the word in the Septuagint, the Hebraic Bible translated into Greek. He opines that in opposition to the commonly held belief which claims that the term refers to a "historical dispersal "of Jews in the 6th century BCE (see Brah, 2005; Tölölyan, 1996), the word has 'theological' connotations suggesting a "divine punishment – dispersal throughout the world" which would be Jews' destiny if they disobey God (p.13). The punishment, Dufoix elaborates, was materialized after the Roman's destroyed the Second

Temple of Jerusalem in CE 70. With the rise of Christianity, the word came to denote members of the church who were displaced from the divine city as a necessary condition for their elevated status as "the chosen people" (p. 13). However, over time the word was excluded from the Christian lexicon and later was assigned to Jews for their cursed dispersal from the land of God. It is this negative meaning of the word that became popular among the diaspora scholarship and for this reason, many scholars trace it as a historical reference to Jewish exiles or to Armenian displacement (Brah, 2005). However, the term was later expanded to encapsulate other minorities and migrant groups who were displaced either forcibly or voluntarily (Munz & Ohliger, 2004). Dufoix (2018) traces this expansion of the term to other domains through three processes.

> [F]irst, secularization, that is, the extension to nonreligious meanings; second, trivialization, namely the widening of the spectrum of relevant cases; and third, but only later, formalization, or the establishment of criteria that allow the shift to occur from a definite to an indefinite category with its subtypes (p. 16).

The processes began as early as 1930s and continued at a slow pace with periodic entries from the scholars such as Simon Dubnow, Robert E. Park, Arnold J. Toynbee. One of the prime reasons for the rare use of the term prior to 1960s, as Judith Shuval (2003) notes, was the belief that migrant groups were supposed to assimilate in the host cultures by shedding their original ethnic and cultural identities. The failure of these assimilation theories in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of migrants adhering to their roots and maintaining a collective consciousness helped the term stretch its meaning (Shuval, 2003) and denote the dispersion of other communities in scholarly circles (Dufoix, 2008, pp. 16–19). During the 90's, attempts were made and typologies were proposed to get a grasp of the concept. To illustrate, Safran (1991, 1999) provides a formula to define diaspora which states that:

1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more peripheral, or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland; 3) their relationship with the dominant element of society in the host land is complicated; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home ....; 5) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another; 6) they wish to survive as a distinct community; 7) their cultural, religious, economic, and/or political relationships with the homeland are reflected in a significant way in their communal institutions. (1991. pp. 83–84).

Robin Cohen (2008) in his seminal book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* suggests that "Jewish archetypal" can serve as the foundation for the theorization of global diaspora. He indexes nine common features to all diasporas. The initial two traits describe causes of displacement from the native country, i.e force or work. Next three traits explain the role of memory and an idealized history of homeland and a pledge to retain it which demands a return for its revival. The final four traits comprise the preservation of group identity and consciousness stretched over a longer period, an uneasy connection with the hostland, sensitivity towards co-ethnic members scattered in other parts of the world, and a cherishing attitude towards pluralism with a focus on creative tolerance in the host society.

Despite the fact that Cohen has expounded the diaspora theory with all possible dimensions in mind, his model has limitations of its own. Scaling down the intricacies of global diasporas whose formulations occur in disparate historical circumstances, contexts and host cultures to a set of features provides little understanding of how such intertwined concepts can be positioned in response to the demands of a transnational world. Besides Cohen, Brubaker (2005) has analyzed three constituent elements of diaspora which are (1) dispersion in space; (2) orientation to a 'homeland'; and (3) boundary-maintenance (p. 5). Gabriel Sheffer (1993,

2003) argues for a classification of diaspora namely stateless and state-based diaspora. For the former, he cites Palestinian diaspora as an example whereas Jewish diaspora is the latter's illustration.

My understanding of the term corresponds with these views and I consider refugees, exiles, emigres, cosmopolitans, nomads, expatriates, etc as cognates due to a greater degree of overlap in their meanings as "all designate a state of being 'not home' (or of being 'everywhere at home,' the flip side of the same coin" (Suleiman, 1998, p. 1). By extension, I use migration, immigration, dispersal, displacement and diasporic movements interchangeably in my subsequent analysis of diasporic fiction. Moreover, in order to restrict the explosive nature of definitions, I prefer Feldner's (2019) summation of the term 'diaspora' drawn from four main diaspora theorists, namely Robin Cohen, Rogers Brubaker, William Safran, and James Clifford. Feldner curtails the inexhaustive list of definitions of diaspora to a few basic features in which loss of home appears as the primary criterial element and the most widely accepted feature of diaspora. These include:

> [1] a history of dispersal from an original homeland, [2] collective memories, myths, and idealization of this homeland, as well as [3] a collective commitment and desire to return to it, which can also be the result of a troubled relationship with the host society (p. 14).

2.3. Home and Diasporic Fiction

Diasporic fiction, being one of the important fields of representation and analysis of diasporic mobilities, has long employed itself to the subject of diasporic migrations and the questions of home, the losses and gains of the migratory processes, and the dynamics of settlement in the hostlands (Nyman, 2009; Okpewho & Nzegwu, 2009; Sarwal, 2017; Walters, 2005). It is produced in various parts of the world and bears the marks of writers' geographical

standing and their personal experiences of migration which may be analogous or conflicting. Writers who either are displaced themselves from their country of origin, voluntarily or involuntarily, or belong to a genealogy of migrants, choose to write about their personal and collective experiences of displacement. Spread across various diasporic contexts, they endeavor to portray home as something lost, missed, and then desired, corresponding with the pre-requisite diasporic conditions. Anne J. Kershen (2004) compendiously captures the heterogenous nature of home by asserting that for diaspora migrants, home or the idea of homeland is:

> a contested metaphor, a carpet bag of memories, emotions and experiences. It is now but it is then. It is over here yet over there. It is days filled with laughter, love and sunshine but it can be also darkness and threat. Real and tangible yet imagined and mythologized, home is deconstructed on departure and then constantly reconstructed as the migrant experience and lifecycle evolve. (p. 262)

The portrayals of these writers are influenced by the theoretical developments taking place in diaspora and its allied theories which fashion the narrativization of their diverse experiences of departures from and arrivals at various new homes and the complex ways these movements intertwine with the cultural and contextual factors of the new and the old. Primarily there exist two major strands of interpretation: those who consider both voluntary and involuntary diasporic displacements as deeply traumatic experiences, generative of numerous pathologies and those who are attentive to the positive aspects of displacements. Arguably, the reasons for this polarization stem from different schools of scholars and their theories emanating from their personal experiences of dislocation. For instance, as Sekechi (2018) argues, scholars like Du Bois, Franz Fanon and, Stuart Hall are expressive of annoyance and

portray a desolate and unpropitious picture of migration, in contrast to Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak who are more inclined towards its positive aspects.

In the former case, the loss of home is seen as a catastrophic event— both in voluntary and involuntary migrations or displacements (Gairola, 2016; Huff-Müller, 2020)— where migrants undergo a variety of distressing and anxiety-provoking experiences. Factors like war and violence, environmental catastrophes or a quest for better life are the main agents of displacements. Some of these are often beyond the control of the individuals and communities who are the target of exclusion. Such displacements can be sudden causing hasty departures and giving no chance of bidding adieu to the soon-to-be-lost home, relationships, and landscapes; in addition, they can be ruthless, involving loss of life and property. In these cases, the loss of home has been equated with a plethora of losses i.e of self, identity, relationships, culture, ethnicity etc which shakes diaspora's sense of belonging, their physical and psychological security and prematurely unsettles the flourishing of their social well-being in a place. In other words, the loss of home "creates a significant loss of the functions of home—meaning, belonging, safety, and relationships for individuals and communities" (Holton, 2016, p. 3). It is a moment of "rupture", an "alienation from time", and "the worst of all punishments: expulsion from the home country's present; and therefore from its linguistic, cultural and political future" (Vigil, 2013, p. 16).

Diasporic fiction engages with this trauma-inducing perception of loss of home in various ways. Diasporic writers portray how the loss of home intimidates diaspora's sense of belonging and identity and jeopardizes their ability to develop lasting relationships with the people and the places, in turn eliciting a sense of rupture and alienation. Edwidge Danticat, Randa Jarrar, Hanif Qureshi, V.S. Naipaul, Yaa Gyasi, Hala Alyan, Zadie Smith Andrea Levy, Amitav Ghosh, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and NoViolet Bulawayo are a few names to quote whose fiction articulates the devastating horrors of loss of home and reflects a desire for

homeland and a hatred for the conditions that occasioned their departure. Vijay Mishra in *The literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* (2007) offers an incisive reading of the works of various Indian authors including V. S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee etc. He asserts at the outset that "all diaspora are unhappy but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way" (p.1) whose conditions primarily descend from the loss of home. Analysing numerous works of fiction, he demonstrates that the diasporic imaginary— which he defines as "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement" (p. 14)— is a condition of impossible mourning or *melancholia*, echoing Freud's use of the terms. In other words, the diasporic condition of loss of home is a wound that cannot be healed and is trans-generationally transferred to the subsequent generations. In this way, he clearly demarcates the term diaspora from transnationals or immigrants where displacement is seen as a positive opportunity. Similarly, the portrayal of displacement of Palestinians, which is one of the most violent occurrences in world history, by Palestinian diasporic writers is replete with the injuries of its horrors. Most of these writers themselves have been the victims of forced displacements and have lived in various refugee camps or their ancestors have experienced the brutalities of forced departure from their beloved homeland. Life in diaspora has shaped their outlooks to life and they voice their painful experiences of forced departures and their life in exile in different parts of the world in their writings. For instance, the Palestinian diasporic writer Randa Jarrar in her first novel *A Map of Home* (2008) narrates the decades-long subjugation of Palestinians and their resultant personal and collective trauma of loss of home. Similarly, Hala Aylan's *Salt Houses* (2017) portrays the disruption of life in the wake of various Arab- Israel wars and the resultant collective trauma of Palestinians. In the same vein, Susan Abulhawa, whose novel is also included for analysis in this study, has vividly portrayed the heart-rending exodus of

Palestinians as a result of Israeli invasion. Her novels *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015a) exemplify the horrifying experiences of Palestinians and their hyphenated existence in the various hostlands.

Such portrayals are hugely critical of the modern conceptions of loss of home which do not regard human mobilities as distressful partings but as normal occurrences pursued for happiness and success in a globalized world. Primarily, the latter approach is seen as a denial of diaspora's loss of fundamental sense of being — that is home — which can lead to trauma (Huff-Müller, 2020). In other words, the metaphorical expansions in the meanings of displacement, in fact, are tantamount to the belittling of the horrors of migration (Teeuwen, 2004). Edward Said's (2000) words are an apropos explanation of this; he says:

> To think of the exile ... as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them, the muteness with which it responds to any attempt to understand it as "good for us." Is it not true that the views of exile in literature and, moreover, in religion obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography? (p. 174)

On the other hand, the modern perceptions of displacement are incongruous to the negative connotations of loss of home and despite the criticism mentioned above, consider it an opportunity to explore new avenues and construct new homes. The widespread currency of transnational and cosmopolitan discourses have subverted the conventional notions of home causing considerable changes in the way home is perceived and written. The mass movements of people and the new patterns of mobility across different borders have made home not a fixed abode but an imaginary that can be found in various places and is continually made and

unmade. These imagined homes encourage new possibilities for negotiations of belonging in contrast to traditional notions of home grounded in the country of origin and transform diaspora's status from the citizens of one country or nation to the citizens of the world. Several diaspora scholars have highlighted the potential of such a status in helping migrants adjust in the new lands via various *homemaking* practices — which I equate with *subjectivation*. Once displaced, the diasporic migrants are essentially required to reconstruct their homes and thereby their fractured subjectivities in unison with the requirements of the new land (Bhabha, 1994; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1990). In so doing, they are compelled to bring together characteristic traits of their homeland and the newly found habits of the hostland to make hybrid forms and hybrid identities or subjectivities. As Agnew (2005) explains that "the individual living in the diaspora experiences a dynamic tension every day between living 'here' and remembering 'there', between memories of place or origin, and entanglements with places of residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home" (p. 4).

This transnational spirit has been embraced by several diasporic writers who, disregarding the traditional mourning-ridden representations of loss of home, present a home on the move, everywhere or nowhere, and have shed light on diaspora's ability to reconstruct (imaginary) homes for themselves in various new locations. Their exiled lives turn into rich reservoirs of experiences discharging powerful trans-cultural narratives that rattle the foundations of conventional thinking about diaspora and displacement. Their writings depict characters, as powerfully as possible and in as many ways as are imaginable, who grapple with their fluctuating identities and homes which are perpetually untethered from geopolitical boundaries and are always in the making. Ileana Dimitriu (2014) argues for an alternative way of thinking about home as a state of mind. By analysing Aboulela's *Minaret (2005)* and Gordimer's *The Pickup (2001)* from Ashcroft's perspective of 'transnation', she asserts that displacement does not necessarily result in loss and alienation but can offer creative substitutes

of rootedness, of re-inventing one's self. The protagonists of the two novels, Najwa and Julie adopt religion/spirituality as their coping mechanism and are able to find new homes for themselves in the hostland, irrespective of their physical and temporal positioning. Likewise, *The Black Album* (1995) by Hanif Kureishi is a young boy's tale who is born to parents of mixed ancestry. Raised in a British culture, the protagonist Shahid is trapped between his Pakistani cultural and religious values and the liberal norms of British Society. He experiences racism for being a Muslim and endeavours to reconstruct his identity in the transnational society of England. In the same vein, the novel *The Lost Daughter of Happiness (1996)* by Geling Yan, represents home as a site of interaction between various cultures, temporalities and psychologies. The protagonist Fusang after undergoing various trials recognizes the strength of her own will and constructs her own sense of belonging to a psychic land. Such ubiquitous syncretism and cultural exchanges of diaspora reveal a fervent striving for new associations and community building unrestrained by the national borders. At every step, the diaspora encounter the exigency of reconstructing their subjectivities in line with the forces of host contexts, i.e race, gender.

One of the themes in transnational diasporic writings is that the diasporic writers scattered across different regions of the world are not only anchored with the homeland but also with each other. In the midst of constant struggles between home and host cultures, experiencing prejudices and constructing hybrid identities, the diasporic writers seek associations with their counterparts displaced to other parts of the world. The notion of diaspora, viewed in this way, assumes an altogether transformed sense, as Isidore *Okpewho* (Okpewho et al., 2001) defines in the Introduction to *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*: "a global space, a worldwide web, that account as much for the mother continent [in her case, Africa] as for wherever in the world her offspring may have been driven by the unkind forces of history" (p. xiv). The writers in this case search for connections

beyond the concept of borders and nation-states. Oftentimes, this search happens through the pages of fiction where substitutes for the lost homeland are constructed.

For diasporic writers, their writings provide opportunities to re-construct homes and reshape their lives in the hostlands, despite variations in their experiences of displacement. Such an approach de-emphasizes the significance of return to a physical home; instead of a physical space or place, the text itself serves as home to which diaspora writers may return and construct a literary identity irrespective of their condition in their various host countries (Walters, 2005). For instance, Ganapathy-Doré in *The Postcolonial Indian Novel in English* (2011) explores 'textual' home with reference to a number of literary authors. She argues that "in the tangible reality of home, it is the text in its symbolic corporeality that functions as a true home for Indian writers" (p. 86). She cites V.S Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1992) as a typical example of a writer creating a textual home where the feeling of (loss of) home can be celebrated. Similarly, Mariama Ifode (2013) in her analysis of Federico Patan's novel *Esperanza* (2013) argues that "home is established through text" (p. 106) which functions as a refuge for migrants and a place of return. For the protagonists Esperanza and Jacobo, this textual home in the form of diary or literature allows frequent and recurrent return visits over and over again.

One of the themes in diasporic fiction is the notion of "in-betweenness" in which migrants lose their sense of rootedness and belonging to a home and consider themselves neither part of the homeland nor of the hostland. They struggle to find their place in inharmoniously exotic cultures and reposition themselves in the host societies simultaneously attempting to acknowledge the significance of their past by remaining devoted to their roots through various practices. For instance, Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories *The Interpreter of Maladies (Lahiri, 2000)* reveals how the first and second generation diasporic characters, mainly of Indian origin are caught in a sense of "in-betweenness and unbelonging"

and try to acclimatize themselves in the host country by constructing a "fantasized homeland" (Král, 2007, p. 65). Another evidence comes from Amy Ling's *Between Worlds: Woman Writers of Chinese ancestry (1990)* where she traces the notion of in-betweenness among Chinese American writers. She points towards two possibilities for diaspora: of a complete refusal to acculturate in the hostland or an acceptance of and reconciliation between the homeland and the hostland. Amit Sarwal's (2017) analysis of various South Asian diaspora writers' narratives now residing in Australia reveals that diasporans construct bifurcated identities due to their existence in two locations and cultures for which he uses the Urdu/Hindi phrase "thoda Indian, thoda Aussi" (little Indian, little Australian) (p. 148). The characters of these stories inhabit both home and hostland at the same time. Nonetheless, he contends that migrants retain their bonds with their ancestral homeland "through acts of imagination, remembering and re-creation" (p. 149). Likewise, Ozun and Kuzgun (2018) describe diasporic subjectivity as a complex mix of varied cultures, histories and languages but at the same time is not part of any of them. Centered on the migratory experiences of Caribbean migrants in Andrea Levy's novel *Fruit of the Lemon,* they describe diasporic subjectivity as "liminality" which instigates a "homing desire"— a wish to have a home. Being in-between, they have no sense of belonging to the host country since they are rejected and scorned which is a "psychological castration" (p. 313). The second generation diasporian protagonist of the novel, Faith Jackson, is caught in-between two cultures and is the victim of identity crisis and a disoriented sense of belonging. Faith's perception of being British born is shattered when her black color and her origins are questioned, leading her to the necessity of discovering her roots. She only manages to resolve this conflict by identifying that home is not a geography but a desire to belong.

Another strand in the diasporic fiction is that home once lost cannot be regained; however, the search for this home never ceases. To illustrate, most of V.S. Naipaul's characters are displaced and dislocated with no place to call home. Sanjy Nigam in his novel, *Transplanted Man* portrays his protagonist Sunny, a doctor by profession, as being unable to find a home either in India or in America. He can be called as "borderline" subject whose identity is continually questioned and is forced to conform with the new culture. Likewise, Isidore Okpewho (2009) notes that the pre-colonial African migrants found their homes dramatically changed upon their return as they "bore little relation to romantic notions that they may have formed about the Africa of the past," (p. 5). Such a home in Edwidge Danticat's (2010) words is a "floating homeland" to which return is impossible.

Diasporic fiction has also disrupted the traditional male-centered portrayals of home and has given voice to women's perspectives on issues of life in the diaspora which previously remained on the periphery. It captures women's experiences at different moments of their life, i.e on the brink of departure, in times of nostalgic remembering, in their revival of home culture through foods, rituals, and domestic chores and in their micro and macro acts of acculturation. For instance, Michelle Cliff, employs her writings to present and critique gendered versions of home in which her characters discard established roles prescribed by the Jamaican society. Amitave Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* (2010) presents a constant tension between male and female perceptions of home through which the lost home is remembered, fantasized and re-created. Home is seen in feminine terms i. e janambhoomi, mother, and therefore a scared site which the Bengali male should respect and revere. Likewise, Karmakar (2019) has investigated the experience of dislocation and acculturation in *The Namesake* from the gendered perspective of a mother. She argues that Ashima's desire for home or homing desire serves as a stimulant to her acculturation and her re-homemaking; however, this homing desire is coupled with her experience of mothering. She mentions that the protagonist of the novel, Ashima "remakes her

home in the United States through cultural negotiation, assimilation, and preservation; all her efforts ultimately spring from her position as a mother", giving way to a distinct form of "maternal subjectivity" (p. 55).

Many have argued loss of home functions as a source of creation for diaspora writers, unloosing their literary creativity to produce narratives of exile and departure (Buruma, 2001; D'Addario, 2007). Their themes, audience and in some cases language, are entirely chosen from the geographical and temporal settings of the homes now lost to them. These writers transform their pain of loss of home into narratives, articulating a range of emotional and psychological states i.e anxiety, mourning, nostalgia, anger, in an infinite variety of forms. Buruma notes that countless literary works have been conceived by "the melancholy knowledge that we can never return to Eden" (2001, p. 3). On the one hand, these narratives are shaped by the agonies of departure, of leaving kinsmen and loved objects; on the other hand, they are also fashioned by the conditions of exile, by the treatment of host society (Walters, 2005). They empower diasporic writers to critique their homelands and create their idealized versions. The fiction of Khalid Husseini and Edwidge Danticat is a clear example of this in which they have attempted to critique the narrow and oppressive practices of individuals as well as institutions in their native lands. In the same vein, Michelle Cliff, while staying in America, writes about homophobia, social divisions based on color, and the American influence on his native homeland Jamaica. In this way, fiction serves as a site of establishing relationships with home by presenting opportunities of engagement with the experiences of movement, memories of home and the construction of new identities and new homes in new places.

Diasporic fiction also focuses on varying connotations of home, belonging and identity for the different generations of diaspora (McWilliams & McWilliams, 2013; Walters, 2005). For instance, Victoria Mason (2007) argues that Palestine as home is central to Palestinian

diaspora, however, the nature of this relationship is different for each generation. While the al-nakba generation— direct affectees of dispersal— and the first exilic generation— descendants of al-nakba generation — kept Palestine alive via "acts of memory", kept their hope of return to a lost Palestine, and established their own communities in their temporary settlements, the second exilic generations' nature of home, identity and belonging, on the other hand, has significantly changed and has become "contrapuntal"— a term she borrows from Edward Said. These later generations have established their "roots" in their 'new homes' whose political and social contexts have complicated their understanding of home, belonging and identity. In other words, the second exilic generation practices "strategic hybridity: moving fluidly between the various elements of their identity", resulting in new and dynamic relationships with the homeland and the hostland (p. 281).

2.4. Loss of Home and Trans-generational Transmission

Displacement is an intensely powerful and metamorphosizing force that not only generates profound changes in the first-generation of diaspora but also in their descendants. Therefore, the impact of loss of home and the shattering of subjectivity is not a matter of concern only for the first-generation diaspora but it also reaches out to the subsequent generations (Daud et al., 2005; Felsen, 1998; Kasinitz et al., 2002; Levitt, 2009; Özbek, 2020; White, 2020; Zhou, 1997). Here the question of generation begs some theorization, of whom to include or exclude from its boundaries. In diasporic contexts, it is a vaguely defined term with heterogenous connotations and oftentimes denotes different "cohorts" of migrants; the 'first generation' representing those who migrate first whereas the 'second generation' are their descendants, either born in the hostland, or reach and experience their formative years in the new country (Mason, 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Rumbaut, 2004). Owing to their differences in age at

the time of dislocation, their experiences of dislocation are heterogenous in nature, affecting their ability to adapt in the host context (Akhtar, 1999).

The second generation migrants are often regarded as "having fractured or fluid identities, multiple belongings and contradictory notions of home" (Chimienti et al., 2019, p. 8). Many have argued that their attachment to their ancestral homes and cultures is less fervent and regular; therefore, they are less likely to be influenced by the home country's traditions (Kasinitz et al., 2009). However, although they did not cause or experience dislocation first-hand, the repercussions of this experience are transmitted to them during their upbringing. Their inevitable encounters with their parents and the latter's social circles and community gatherings attune them with the conditions and circumstances of their parents' dispersal. In Levitt's (2009) words, they are "at least witnesses, if not active protagonists, in this drama" (p. 1226).

Various scholars and theorists have sought to explicate the trans-generational transmission of experiences from the first to the subsequent generations (Atkinson, 2017; Caruth, 2013; Schwab, 2010). In particular, findings of several psychoanalytic scholars have been profoundly insightful (Abraham & Torok, 1994; Berthin, 2010; Frosh, 2013; Kogan, 2012; Mariotti, 2012) which, for instance, regard trans-generational transmission as a transfer of phantoms and hauntings or a continuation of the ancestors' melancholia, in the Freudian sense of the term. For instance, Stephen Frosh (2013), for instance, testifies that psychoanalysis is "saturated with the idea of unconscious transmission from the past to the present, from one generation to another, and from one person to another" (p.118). He further argues that the passing-on of ghosts of the past generation is a traumatic experience which "comes back as a plague, a repetitive and destructive inheritance [which] can only be released with violence and pain. It may be a ghost from individual history... or a transgenerational one" (p. 245). Support for this view also comes from Kristin White (2021) who argues that "the working through of such losses can indeed be

a process that stretches across several generations, affecting the children and the grandchildren of the migrant" (p. 30).

This has been endorsed by Freud himself whose ideas of transference and inheritance are nothing but perpetual processes of transmission that fluidly and unpredictably traverse individuals, generations, and even genera (Slavet, 2009). Jacqueline Rose (2007) argues that the major driving force behind this is Freud's Jewish identity as laid out in his work *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 1964). While exploring the origins of Jewish religion and its connection to the figure of Moses, *Moses and Monotheism* delves into the idea of trans-generational haunting. According to Freud, the traumatic experiences of the Jewish people during their enslavement in Egypt and their subsequent liberation by Moses had a profound impact on their collective psyche. This trauma was then passed down from generation to generation, resulting in a sense of cultural and historical unease that continued to haunt the Jewish people. Freud argues that this trans-generational haunting was an important factor in the development of monotheistic religion as Jewish people, in their search for a sense of meaning and purpose in the wake of their traumatic history, turned to monotheism as a way of creating a sense of unity and continuity across generations. The development of monotheistic religion, in Freud's view, can be seen as a kind of collective psychological defense mechanism, a way of coping with the ongoing trauma of trans-generational haunting. By creating a shared belief system and a sense of connection to their ancestors, the Jewish people were able to find meaning and purpose in their suffering, and to overcome the psychological burden of their traumatic history.

Central to the idea of trans-generational transmission is the work of Hungarian-born French psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török on Phantoms and hauntings. In their seminal work, *The Shell and the Kernel, Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1994), they propounded a theory of trans-generational transmission of an unsaid secret as a symptom of catastrophic trauma, a "transgenerational phantom," passed on to a nescient descendant. Being the affectees

of the Holocaust, the trauma of lived experience comes to be the cornerstone of their writings. Abraham in his essay *Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology* (Abraham, 1987, pp. 287–292) argues that the "secret psychic substance" or the "tombs enclosed" inside the ancestor's psyches are unconsciously inherited by some people. In other words, the "voices of one generation" or their "secrets buried alive" can be perceived in the next generations' unconscious. This 'transgenerational phantom' is a "formation of the unconscious" indicating the passing of a "gap," or 'nescience,' from the parents' unconscious to the children. Abraham writes:

> What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left in us by the secrets of others... The phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious – for good reason. It passes – in a way yet to be determined – from the parent's unconscious into the child's... In no way can the subject relate to the phantom as his or her own repressed experience. The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other. (pp. 287-291)

Abraham's work has been of great influence for the later theorists: for instance Christine Berthin in his book *Gothic Hauntings* (2010) employs the unorthodox psychoanalytic position of Abraham and Torok to break from the traditional understanding of haunting as a narrative device of the Gothic.Instead, he proposes that haunting is a symptom of unspeakable loss that cannot be signified in language, a secret, transmitted trans-generationally, unsaid due to its association with shame, repressed guilt, or as a result of irreconciled trauma. Owing to its unstated nature, Abraham refers to it as a "'phantom': an unconscious formation which has never been conscious and is conveyed from a parent, a dead person or a lost object to the unconscious of the child, the living subject or 'phantom carrier'" (p. 5). Further, Berthin considers — and which I find closely akin to Lacan and my argument — every subject as an "intersubject", dependent upon an 'other' for its construction, by virtue of which it "inherits

not simply a cultural identity but also the repressed of his culture" (p. 8). In this sense, the subject is merely a connection in the generational chain and is shaped by the unconscious desires of its parents or people who foster and regulate its identification process of 'self-making'. Berthin argues:

> the subject inherits a defect in the transmission, a gap, a foreclosed meaning rather than a message, however cryptic. Unless it is worked through, a trauma, a secret will be passed to the next generation in the form of phobia, gestures, incomprehensible symptoms that do not emerge from individual experience but are the result of unconscious transmissions. The subject feels as if he were spoken through. He becomes a "phantom carrier," the mere conveyor of unconscious messages beyond the scope of his own individual life (p. 9).

In the same vein, Mariotti (2012), while investigating the long-forgotten role of mother in psychoanalytic discussions of mother-child splitting, argues that the mother unconsciously experiences her child as the carrier of her psychic life and its (un)desirable aspects. On the one hand, the mother helps the child structure his/her sense of self via identification; yet, simultaneously she engages in a process of blurring the boundaries between the child and herself. Mariotti contends that:

> If all goes well, the child will internalise from her an experience of boundaries that are protective and foster a boundaried self, but are 'porous' enough to allow communication with others. This is a transgenerational process, as the issue of symbiosis (lack of boundaries) and relatedness (requiring flexible boundaries) which is negotiated between mother and infant reaches back to the mother's relationship to her own mother, and to the future generations, as it will be internalised by the child. (p. 14)

Likewise, Ilany Kogan (2012) discusses the transmission of trauma of the Holocaust to the later generation of victims, mostly "through early, unconscious identifications which carry in their wake the parents' perception of an everlasting, life-threatening inner and outer reality" (Kogan, 2012, p. 5). In this case, descriptions of holocaust savageries are suffused into these children's minds by their parents which trigger feelings of loss, disgrace and aggression and compel them to enact the traumas smothered in their parents' "inner world" (Kogan, 2012). She details two mechanisms which transmit "historical trauma" to the future generations: "primitive identification" and "deposited representation" (pp. 6-7). The former refers to "the child's unconscious introjection and assimilation of the damaged parent's self-images" via parent-child interactions that aim at healing and recovering the parent (p. 7). Such an identification deprives the child of developing its own independent sense of self, resulting in an undifferentiation between the self and the damaged parent. Kogan finds parallels between this identification and the one that occurs in pathological mourning in which the mourner tries to seize the object itself, instead of attempting to resemble it. In fact, the "mourner renounces the object, at the same time preserving it in a cannibalistic manner" (Kogan, 2012, p. 7). This identification is at the heart of child's inability to attain self-distinctiveness. The second process, "Deposited representation" is concerned with the role of the parent who forcefully, and also consciously or unconsciously, instills aspects of his/herself on to the child, affecting its sense of identity. This transforms the child into a repository of implanted traumatic imagos which frequently stimulate unconscious fantasies. Resultantly, the children are made to work through humiliation, anger, and regret which their parents could not work through (Volkan, 2002).

Indeed, these studies substantively evidence the trans-generational transmission of unconscious features of one generation to the next and thus provide grounds for the extension of these analogies to diaspora and migration. In this regard, Mishra's work (2007) is critical

which invokes psychoanalytic theories of mourning, mainly Freudian, to elaborate Lacanian Imaginary in the context of Indian diaspora. He argues that the loss of home is an eternally incurable wound which is transmitted trans-generationally until all traces of the primary dislocation are erased from memory or until a migrant or its posterior generations' psychic re-integration occurs via (re)symbolization. This indicates that the loss of home is so intense and overwhelming that it makes mourning impossible, engendering an everlasting melancholia. The resultant forever melancholic diasporic subject identifies unconsciously with a ghost or phantom of home within and lives on this structural unrepresentable absence. Mishra (2007) asserts: "there is no immediate cure for the condition [of impossible mourning] because the loss remains abstract; it is not compensated for by happiness in the new nation-state and is therefore internalized as the emptiness of the ego itself" (p. 10). In another study, Delphine Munos (2013) has explored Jhumpa Lahiri's works including *The Namesake* from the perspectives of various psychoanalytic thinkers. Her exploration reveals Lahiri's use of melancholy to illustrate second-generation diasporic subjectivities caught in the predicament of melancholia— a state of impossible mourning. The "hyphenated children" of Lahiri's first generation characters, especially Gogol, imbibe their parents' traumas of dislocation in their psyche which is "emptied of meaning, an unsymbolized absence"(p. 18) and thereby thwarts Gogol's entry into the symbolic order, leaving no choice but melancholia.

Such views point towards the widespread tendency of considering trans-generational transmission as a passing-on of pathologies, traumas and anxieties, resultantly requiring various remedies to cure the subsequent generation 'patients'. However, these interpretations are reductionist in their scope as they tend to write off the positive aspects of trans-generational transmissions, rendering only a gloom-ridden picture of the diasporic experience. My argument with regard to trans-generational transfer (detailed in chapter 3) departs from these views. I argue that this transfer of experience from the first to the subsequent generations is in fact a

transmission of *lack of home*. Since home in this sense stands for a mirror other which is central to the formation of diasporic subjectivity, the transmission takes place during the inter-generational mirror encounters between the first and the second or subsequent generations and shapes the subjectivation process in the second generation. I also do not see this as a transfer of pathologies but an inevitable structural necessity.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed how loss of home has been incisively portrayed in diaspora theory and fiction from a range of theoretical perspectives. First, the representation of home and its loss has been briefly surveyed in literary history. Second, the meaning of the term diaspora has been explored, from its earliest usage in Greek history leading to its manifold modern applications in a range of contexts. Second, the developments in diaspora and its allied theories have been detailed which describe loss of home as a traumatic experience, and as a window into various new possibilities of homemaking in the hostlands. Based on these theoretical positions, literary illustrations of loss of home have been cited which provide insightful findings pertinent to the experiences of dislocation. Finally, the extension of impact of loss of home to the subsequent diasporic generations has been discussed at length, in an attempt to provide a solid foundation to my theorization of trans-generational transfer of lacks of the first generation to the subsequent generations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LACANIAN SUBJECTIVATION AND DIASPORIC *LACK* OF HOME

In this chapter, I present a framework based on Jacques Lacan's concept of *lack* for the cross-cultural analysis of diasporic loss of home and homemaking in the selected works of diasporic fiction. Drawing on the discussion in the previous chapters pertaining to the constitutive nature of home for diasporic subjectivities, which are shattered in the wake of displacement and are continually reconstructed (Venn, 2009, 2010), I argue that these shattered diasporic subjectivities are reconstructed in line with Jacques Lacan's process of subject formation, or more precisely *subjectivation,* which occurs via three Oedipal stages namely, *frustration, privation* and *castration.* The process culminates in the formation of a castrated (lacking and desiring) diasporic subject — or a *subjectivized* subject — in whose psychic realm a constant negotiation between lack and desire takes place, leading to creative forms of homemaking or acculturation in the hostland.

3.1. Methodology

This research is interdisciplinary in nature and employs textual analysis techniques to systematically examine and interpret the texts to uncover their underlying meanings, contexts, and significance. The primary dataset includes three novels authored by Jhumpa Lahiri, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Susan Abulhawa. Although the existing body of literature on home and diaspora assists in identifying the research gap, the conceptual framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis serves to structure and advance the argument.

In order to simplify the complex alliance between apparently different concepts i.e. Lacanian psychoanalysis, diasporic fiction and diasporic subjectivity, I start with a description of Lacan's complex schema directly or indirectly related to the *subjectivation* process with a view to set the foundations for my subsequent comparison between Lacanian and diasporic

subjects and their subjectivities. Primary importance has been given to Lacan's theory of Real, Imaginary and Symbolic registers or orders, the Mirror Image Stage and the Oedipus Complex which are crucial to the establishment and understanding of *lack* in the subject. After that, I have detailed diasporic *subjectivation* process in unison with Lacan, and its rendering of *subjectivised* diasporic subjects who ceaselessly long for home. Owing to the trans-generational nature of the experience of dislocation, I have further described how the subject's lack is transferred to the subsequent generations via mirror exchanges which will be used for the analysis of two novels in the forthcoming chapters (chapter 4 and 6). Finally, I have discussed the inherently creative aspect of Lacanian *lack* which paves the way for diasporic homemaking or acculturation in the hostland via various micro and macro creative acts. In order to achieve my objectives, I draw on English translations of Lacan's original works as well as interpretations of his complex schema by various theorists.

3.2. Jacques Lacan in Context

Jacques Marie Émile Lacan (1901—1981) was a French psychoanalyst who radically altered the course of psychoanalytic treatment in the second half of 20th century. Over the course of his life, he produced an intricate theory of psychoanalysis combining the latter with a range of new disciplines i.e. linguistics, philosophy, structuralism, phenomenology, mathematics, and surrealism. His famous 'return to Freud' — a reaction to the then-prevalent deviations of psychoanalysis from Sigmund Freud's work— culminated in an extensive body of work transcending the domains that Freud himself sought to explain. Lacan's influence today has reached far and wide affecting various fields of study including structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, linguistics, philosophy, literature, film studies, anthropology etc. This study brings into play a range of Lacan's intersecting concepts essential for the process of *subjectivation* i.e Oedipus Complex, desire, fantasy, jouissance etc. However, before delving

into any discussion of these concepts, it is essential to understand Lacan's structure of human psych foregrounded in his theory of registers as it forms the bedrock of Lacan's oeuvre.

3.3. The Real, The Symbolic, The Imaginary

Lacan's theory of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary first appeared in 1953 and has ever since remained the corner stone of Lacanian psychoanalysis, despite undergoing considerable changes over the course of time. The theory is often mistakenly equated with Sigmund Freud's topographic model of human psyche—Id, Ego and Superego; however, it is not coterminous with Freud's model and instead represents a structure of interacting realms within which the human psyche operates (Bailly, 2009). Lacan uses the metaphor of Borromean knot to underscore the interdependency of the three registers: the registers intersect each other at some point of the knot and the space in the toruses of the rings encompasses all psychic activity. In this way, Lacan prevents a simplistic understanding of the registers as completely separate realms of the human psyche and downplays the primacy of any of the registers. Towards the later part of his career, Lacan modified this theory to include the fourth circle of "sinthome" in the Borromean knot (Lacan, 2016) whose functions is to keep the knot together and provide stability to the psychic system. However, my discussion below for the purposes of this study is limited to the three registers, starting with the Real.

The Real is the most complex of Lacan's concepts as it does not refer to any material object or a thing (Homer, 2016). It is a realm of the psyche which the signifiers are unable to express and thus remains beyond the grasp of language, a chaotic mayhem out of which the world is born via the signifier. Despite this ineffability, it stands in a dialectical relationship with the Symbolic and the Imaginary, a non-existence as an essential requirement of existence, or an inverse of both. Being a part of the Borromean knot, it shapes and is shaped by the

Symbolic and the Imaginary, for instance, in hallucinations and delusions when the intersection of signifier and signified is broken and the Real appears in the toruses of the Borromean ring.

The Real stays even after the subject's entry into the Symbolic when everything has been labelled with the signifier, except the Real which "has not yet been symbolized, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolisation" (Fink, 1995, p. 25). The Real is fixed and this fixation is frightening and a challenge for the analysts; when a patient is unable to attach a signifier with other signifiers, the unattached signifier roams free and causes neurotic symptoms, psychological trauma, melancholia, repetition compulsion etc as can be traced in behaviours connected with *death drive* and neuroses (Bailly, 2009, p. 95). Thus, the job of an analyst is to find the weakest residual link that still exists between the dangling and other signifiers to allow the patient to give his/her grief/loss a tangible symbolic form expressed in language.

Among the three registers, the Symbolic is relatively easier to understand due to its proximity with its literal meaning. It is the realm of signifiers and meanings and is the unconscious organizing principle in human societies (Bailly, 2009). Lacan's inspiration for the formulation of the Symbolic lies in anthropology, especially in the work of Claude Levi Strauss, who found a fundamental structure in the functioning of all human societies (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). The structure precedes us, accumulated and shaped over centuries and can be unearthed in the network of exchanges, kinship customs, religious practices and matrimonial ceremonies. Lacan identified that language is one such structure, following Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of linguistic sign (De Saussure, 2011). A sign for Saussure refers to signifiers or the "sound image" — a psychological imprint of the sound on senses and not the material sound — and the signified or the "concept" of a thing, and not the thing itself. A signifier has meaning through its relationship with other signifiers in the chain; however, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary due to which different associations,

combinations, constructions and reconstructions are possible resulting in a number of meanings. Two primary processes of selection and combination govern the process of signification. Words are arranged paradigmatically (selection) and syntagmatically (combination). What it means is that when we speak, we make certain choices from our mental repository of words (selection) and then we combine those words with other words (combination). Lacan believed that human unconscious is made up of only (repressed) signifiers which can be accessible via other signifiers and hence can be brought to conscious speech via analysis. Had the relationship between the signifier and the signified not been arbitrary, the signifier would be attached to a single signified which once repressed, could not be retrieved. The Symbolic thus reveals itself in language, and in the social and structural codes of the society which are internalized gradually and become part of our nature. Just as language pre-exists and humans are thrown into it and whose nuances and subtilities they acquire slowly; likewise, the Symbolic predates existence and can be accessed via the experience of loss which the child first encounters in the Imaginary Order.

The Imaginary is the order of senses and perceptions where a host of inter and intra-subjective relationships are formed. It should not be linked with the literal meaning of the term, though the elements of seduction, illusion and lure are inherent to it (Evans, 2006). For Lacan, the relationship between the Imaginary and the Symbolic is identical to the relationship of signifiers and signifieds; the signifiers are the representation of ideas and thus belong to the Symbolic whereas the latter are ideas themselves and thus are classified in the Imaginary. The most important aspect of the Imaginary is the Mirror Image Stage which is central to the structure of human subjectivity (Evans, 2006).

In his seminal essay *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience* (Lacan, 2006), Lacan explicates a child's first perception of 'I', separate from its (m)other, in the former's literal or metaphorical encounter with a mirror

image. The dialectical *identification* with the mirror image forms the infant's ego or Ideal-I splitting it into a subject and an object. What it means is that since the subject identifies itself in "the otherness of the specular image", it objectifies itself in the mirror; or in other words, it identifies itself with an imaginary other—an object (Chiesa, 2007). This mistaken sense of self alienates the subject from the self that resides inside the mirror and the subject is established as a rival to itself. At the same time, it also separates the subject as distinct from the mother, with which it was in joyous union.

Drawing upon various experiments in psychology and Gestalt theory, Lacan posits that the primary human experiences are of formlessness, disarray and incohesion in which the child perceives itself as a fragmentary mass with no control over its movements — a *Corps Morcele* or body in pieces. Henri Wallon's study of the behavior of a six month's old child and a chimpanzee of the same age in front of a mirror was highly instrumental for Lacan (Homer, 2004). In this experiment, Wallon discovered that the reflected self-image in the mirror was a source of fascination and jubilance for the child whereas the chimpanzee simply remained unperturbed by it. Lacan found its justification in Gestalt theory (Chiesa, 2007) which states that animals instinctively recognize their peers and are attracted towards them; On the other hand, human instinct functions in a distorted manner due to the fact that human child is born prematurely and is dependent upon someone (usually a mother) to fulfil its biological and bodily needs. Lacan postulated that between 6-18 months, the infant sees its own image in the literal or a reflective mirror, having a 'complete form' and control over body movements which contrasts the fragmented body outside the image with motor incompetence. The incoherence of the child engenders a desperate anticipatory eagerness for this emerging subject to get hold of some image which could give it a sense of wholeness and unity. The child therefore, identifies with the mirror image compensating its "organic insufficiency (helplessness)" with the "ideal imaginary unity" offered by the image (Chiesa, 2007, p. 18). Lacan asserts that the

Mirror Stage is a kind of *identification*, "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes *[assume]* an image" (Lacan, 2006. p. 76). Latent in this act is the child's denial of its fragmentation which instigates an inclination towards misrecognition or 'méconnaissance'. This is succinctly captured by Lacan:

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. (Lacan, 2006, p. 78)

This moment brings intense joy and excitement for the child as it, for the first time, discovers itself as a unitary being, with a formative sense of subjectivity and greater cohesion and motor competence. However, Lacan's focus here on the 'alienating identity' and 'rigid structure' alludes to two potential situations; on the one hand, if one does not have an image or means of attaining bodily cohesion, then the annoying *Corps Morcele* or fragmentary experience persists. On the other hand, identifying too strongly with an image can lead to an excessive and immoderate fixation. Both situations are problems of psychopathology and thus require treatment.

The structuring of one's I outside oneself leads to an important Lacanian distinction between the subject and the ego. The ego is a fictional construction whose main function in Lacan is to 'mis-recognize' in the mirror (Homer, 2016; Lacan, 2006) and give an illusory sense of unity to the subject, saving it from the fragmentary anxiety. This understanding of the ego is incongruous with its conventional connotations of being a central agency that needed to be strengthened against the irrational drives of the unconscious as a cure. Lacan, on the other hand, claimed that the ego needs to be subservient to the *logic* of a more fundamental layer of

subjectivity. Fundamentally thus, the ego "is not the subject *tout court*; on the contrary, it corresponds to the subject's *identifying alienation* in the Imaginary other" (Chiesa, 2007, p. 14). In other words, human self or identity is formed as ego in the Mirror Image Stage but the ego's emergence also formulates the fundamental source of subject's alienated status. In this sense, the image has a dual function here; it founds the subject as an ego and at the same time, it separates it (the subject) from itself (Lacan, 2006, p. 76).

Initially, Lacan locates the Mirror Image Stage at a specific moment in a child's life; however, he later extends it to its entire life span calling it a permanent feature of a subject's Imaginary structure, a 'phase' rather than a 'stage' (Chiesa, 2007; Evans, 2006; Lacan, 2006). In other words, human subjectivity never transcends the fundamental experience of 'being' a body in pieces, or a subjectivity in pieces and formlessness. The subject repeats the Mirror Image experience over and over, forming new imaginary identifications in the successive relationships (Chiesa, 2007). Thus, the Mirror Image Stage becomes a defining feature of the child's psychic and spatial "threshold of the visible world" (Lacan, 2006, p. 77) and forms its "ideal, lived and social selves" (Marshall, 2012, p. 54). In this sense, our life's various discontents — i.e displacement in the context of this thesis — are a mere "epiphenomenon of a primal, archaic, pre-oedipal discontent that begins with the Mirror Image Stage" (Goebel, 2012, p. 228).

The above description of Lacan's Real, Symbolic and Imaginary orders is pivotal to the understanding of subjectivation process (detailed below) and provides a solid footing to elaborate on the complexities of diasporic subjects and their subjectivities later in this chapter.

3.4. The Lacanian Subject

The most significant of Lacan's contributions, and the most relevant to this study, is his theory of human subject which he explored and advanced over much of his life. The theory

chiefly derives from the Freudian idea of *Spaltung* or splitting wherein this split manifests itself as "an ontological condition of subjectivity" (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 260). Lacan criticized the disregard of this split or the "self's radical ex-centricity... the truth discovered by Freud" in the then psychoanalytic approaches, most importantly in ego psychology, considering it as a falsification of "the order and method of psychoanalytic mediation" (Lacan, 2005, p. 130). For him, the study of the subject is the sole "object of psychoanalysis" (Layton, 2008, p. 61). around which the whole agenda of psychoanalysis revolves. This is clearly evident in the following assertion by Lacan:

> Psychoanalysis is neither a *Weltanschauung*, nor a philosophy that claims to provide a key to the universe. It is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject. It poses this notion in a new way, by leading the subject back to his signifying dependence. (Lacan, 1998, p. 77)

Here, Lacan clearly places psychoanalysis in stark contrast to the frameworks of *cogito* or conscious 'I' theories and alludes to Freudian discovery of the unconscious subject as the determinant of human behaviors. Ever since, the scholarly exegeses within psychoanalytic community have largely remained consistent on the status of the subject being split and divided; however, questions related to the nature of this split have often been raised, i.e " is it birth that divides the subject internally? Separation? Annihilation anxiety? Innate aggression and omnipotence? A result of an originary and prolonged state of helpless dependence? Castration and the Oedipus complex? Unconscious narcissistic identifications? Acute trauma? Ongoing interpersonal strife?" (Layton, 2008, p. 61).

Primarily, and to a certain extent interestingly, a Lacanian subject is not a fixed, stable entity with a tangible existence; instead, it is a mere "assumption" and a psychoanalytic "construct" (Fink, 1995, p. 35), constitutively split, "ex-centric" or outside itself, a void, (Hook & Neill, 2008), a lacking subject or a "subjectivized lack" (Chiesa, 2007). It is

constituted *in* and *through* language (Hook, 2017) via constant negotiations among the Real (the world of pure materiality beyond the realm of language and expression), the Imaginary (the register of images and fantasy) and the Symbolic (the register of language, law and culture). Over the course of his life, Lacan approached the subject almost always equivocally and offered its various versions and dimensions as he advanced his theory. It is oftentimes described via various surrogates since it cannot be captured in language due to its fleeting nature. Malcolm Bowie's (1991) description centres on this incorporeal, unembodied and ethereal nature of the Lacanian subject. He asserts:

> The subject' is no longer a substance endowed with qualities, or a fixed shape possessing dimensions, or a container awaiting the multifarious contents that experience provides: it is a series of events within language, a procession of turns, tropes and inflections. (p. 76)

Bowie undoubtedly alludes to the long philosophical tradition which assumed the subject to be a 'substance' equipped with certain qualities, which the Lacanian subject is not. Perhaps, the most compelling elaboration is offered by Derek Hook (2017) which succinctly captures the elusive nature of the subject. He asserts:

> The Lacanian subject is not a permanent or constant entity; it is an episodic, or vanishing phenomena. It is the subject as event which – like the unconscious itself – fades and resurfaces, proving not just elusive but essentially discontinuous. This subject is not in fact an 'entity' at all, certainly not in any substantial sense. It is rather a flash, a pulse, a spark, a type of truth-possibility. Utterly contingent on the productions of speech that, paradoxically, it itself produces, this subject is at once constituted in and as speech. In this sense the subject encompasses an irreconcilability: it is the disjunction (the 'real') evinced between the act of speaking (enunciation) and what is spoken (statement), two facets of speech which can never quite be fully reconciled. At once

> something that is constituted (by speech) and self-constituting (in speaking) this subject-as-rift is nothing other than the barred subject of the unconscious which psychoanalysis endeavours to treat. (p. 174)

The quote bespeaks of the symbolic dimensions of the subject wherein it is realized only *in* and *as* speech, or, through linguistic operations. In other words, the subject is realized in moments when there is incongruity between the signifiers, or between 'enunciation' and 'statement', the former denoting the ego and the latter referring to the subject of unconscious (Lacan, 2006).

An interesting dimension of understanding the subject is its inter-dependence on the object which itself is a complex and paradoxical concept denoting numerous things during Lacan's teachings. This object is not a physical thing of the real world which could be attained but an object that emerges as a lost object, an *objet petit a*, a non-existent existence (Lander, 2006). In Freudian theory of drives (Freud, 1957a), the object refers to a person or thing through which the drive achieves its aim (Bailly, 2015; Johnson, 2019). In this sense, the object is anything that assumes a psychic representation, something whose images can be perceived through one's senses. From the Freudian conception of object, Lacan extracts his own version of the *l'objet petit a* which translates as 'small a object' in English — the 'a' referring to the French word 'autre' which means 'other'— although he kept the term untranslated.

Lacan's formulation comes from his exploration of the relationship between the child and the (m)other, both considered as subjects. For Lacan, the primordial world of a child is centered on instant access to *jouissance*—a term signifying an amalgam of pleasant and unpleasant satisfaction— of enjoying the (m)other's body which at certain point is thwarted by the Father's intervention who enforces prohibitions on the child's jouissance and compels it to enjoy via socially appropriate modes. The child experiences loss of the maternal Thing and is made to seek alternative modes of jouissance by means of subsequent identifications with various objects of desire, the various 'small others' (persons, things, objects) to which various

ideas and fantasies could be attached. As a matter of fact, the subject never had the primordial jouissance (drive satisfaction) and only retroactively constructs the fantasy of having it before it was prohibited due to the Symbolic law. In other words, the object that the child thinks that it has lost did not exist in the first place and is only a later construction. It is without an ontological existence despite the fact that it is situated in the other. However, it is the property of 'no being' that makes it irreplaceable, unlike the objects of the Symbolic which are reduced to the signifiers. In Lacan's formulation, the subject does not desire what the other has, but the absence *in* the other or its lack. In other words, the constitutive absence of the other is animative of a subject's desire which Lacan terms as *objet petit a*, a "manifestation of nothing" (McGowan, 2013, p. 314) . Sean Homer (2004) aptly asserts:

> The objet a is not, therefore, an object we have lost, because then we would be able to find it and satisfy our desire. It is rather the constant sense we have, as subjects, that something is lacking or missing from our lives. We are always searching for fulfilment, for knowledge, for possessions, for love, and whenever we achieve these goals there is always something more we desire; we cannot quite pinpoint it but we know that it is there. This is one sense in which we can understand the Lacanian real as the void or abyss at the core of our being that we constantly try to fill out. The objet a is both the void, the gap, and whatever object momentarily comes to fill that gap in our symbolic reality. What is important to keep in mind here is that the *objet a* is not the object itself but the function of masking the lack. (pp. 87-88)

The quote illustrates the interrelationship of lack and the object. The object itself is the lack and at the same time the substitute that fills that lack. It is for this reason, Lacan termed it an object-cause of desire.

3.5. Lack and Desire

Lack as a reference point is oftentimes understood with its ordinary connotations, alluding to an absence and a void that can be filled (Carling & Collins, 2018). In Lacanian lexicon, however, the term designates an absence of a fundamental and positive kind which is central to human subjectivity and the emergence of desire (Owens & Almqvist, 2018). In Mari Ruti's words, it is 'the relentless sense of incompleteness that characterizes human existence" (Ruti, 2008, p. 487). The lack is eternal and more importantly, normal, as it necessitates the construction of future identities via identification with the set of characteristics socially available. It continues to endlessly re-emerge; and "structures [its] relationship with social others" (Yang, 2018, p. 1018). Hook & Neill (2008) elaborate this idea that the notion of subject as lacking leads to "a sequence of ongoing identificatory acts" by means of which an essence-less pre-subject attains "a positive (symbolic-imaginary) identity". They contend that "the constitutive impossibility of a cohesive, positive, autonomous subjectivity is precisely the underlying condition of possibility for the myriad imaginary and symbolic identifications that characterize the complexity of subjectivity". (p. 248)

Lacanian lack is inseparably entwined with its cognate—desire—for the lost object, for the *objet petit a* ; in fact, it is the lack that causes desire to rise. Our life goals, our constant and inexhaustible search for the objects of satisfaction only exposes the relationship between lack and desire. In fact, what is desired is the lack itself and for the subject's successful continuity, the desire needs to be unsatisfied. Lacan succinctly captures this relationship by asserting that "desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists. (Lacan, 1991, p. 223). In other words, lack is a necessary condition for the desire to surface; the subject first needs to lack, and it has to remain lacking for the desire to continue.

Desire can be best understood only by distinguishing it from need and demand. Lacan maintained that "desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated

from need" (Lacan, 2006, p. 689). Need is situated in the Imaginary and the Real order as an instinctive urge in contrast to demand which belongs to the Symbolic and is directed towards an interlocutor, "therefore, it is subject to dependency, and a demand for love" (Azari, 2008, p. 15). To put it more simply, a new-born child cannot fulfill his biological needs such as hunger due to motor incompetence; therefore, it seeks the mother's help for their gratification and the mother is usually there to answer his call. The need becomes a demand through the process of signification or when it is articulated in language; for instance, the baby utters a scream or a cry which is a signifier and belongs to the realm of symbolic order. The cry, on the one hand, signals a neediness which must be satiated; on the other, it is suggestive of the love of mother because whenever a cry is made, the mother is available. The child assumes this presence of the mother/fulfilment of need as a marker of unconditional love. In the process of need becoming a demand, something is left out which cannot pass through the narrow passage of signification. This left over is desire. Thus, need and demand have a paradoxical relationship because "what is demanded is never what is actually needed" (Bailly, 2009, p. 110). Thus, when the baby makes a demand using signifiers available to him, and then is provided with that thing, it still is not satisfied because it didn't actually ask for this thing but something that it couldn't articulate in the available symbolic system and which is by nature inexpressible. It, thus, unsatisfactorily accepts whatever is given in response to its demand. The gap created here doesn't dwindle with the acquisition of language since as the child grows and becomes more inscribed in the Symbolic order of language, the needs also become intricate. The desire being an excess formed out of the articulation of need in demand is testified by Lacan when he says that "desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second" (Lacan, 2006, p. 580)

In this way, Lacan transforms desire into an impossibility, a desire "of and for something impossible" (Azari, 2008, p. 10) whose primary job is to "re-appropriate and

reproduce itself" (Bailly, 2009) and thereby, continuously recreate the lack that engenders it. That's why when a (fantasy-construct) desire is gratified, it shifts to another desire and the process goes on with the help of innumerable fantasy formations (Azari, 2008). In other words, despite its fantasy achievement of various surrogates, desire persists. This sense of lack and desire, as Hook & Neill (2008) and O'Shea (2002) point out, contrasts the reductive caricature of negativity occasionally applied to it in the scholarly debates.

3.6. The Process of Subjectivation

Lacan's subjectivation process involves a passage through the Oedipus Complex and its various stages whose resolution marks the subject's entry into this symbolic realm of laws and rules. The human child around its neo-natal period exists in the Real Order having unthwarted access to jouissance, in a state of complete and jubilant union with the *(m)other* where there is no sense of want or *lack* since all its needs are fulfilled immediately. However, the child is born into a pre-existing Symbolic Order of language and law which is not of its making and which demands the child to take a Symbolic position in order to become a social being. Nonetheless, since the child does not inherit the Symbolic codes of language and culture, it has to undergo a gradual process of learning, gradually moving away from the pure materiality of the Real towards the Symbolic Order via the mediation of the Imaginary Order of bodily and phantasmatic experiences. This is an imperative demand and there is no escape from it. During this journey, the intense and desirous dyadic relationship between the child and the (m)other, presumably the primary caregiver should be broken by a third element, the No-Of-The-Father, for the child's subjectivity to emerge. However, it is one of the greatest challenges of psychoanalysis to move beyond this dyadic to a triangular relationship. Failure in this process may result in various clinical repercussions. For instance, Lacan's three clinical categories namely *psychosis* (paranoia and schizophrenia), *neurosis* (hysteria, obsessional

neurosis and phobia) and *perversion (*sadism, masochism and fetishism) are determined with reference to this paternal function. The paternal function is *foreclosed* in the psychotics, *repressed* in the neurotics and *disavowed* in perverts. These structures can also be described in relation to the desire of the mother which is 'never barred', 'is barred' and 'must be barred' for the psychotic, neurotic and pervert respectively (Fink, 1999, p. 194).

It is important to remember here that that subject formation is not a linear chronological process. As Verhaeghe's (2008) argues that although human subjectivity is constructed during the infancy but it is not a process that has an end. It is a lifelong process that happens "both pro- and retroactively" by means of which new and existing signifiers acquired through identification are constantly engaged with each other and are continuously altering meaning. "The result is a circular—not linear—identity formation; chronological time is replaced by logical time" (p. 211). The insistence on logical rather than chronological time undermines the linearity of the process of subject formation, discarding the fixity of subjectivities. Alternatively, the retroactive nature of the subject construction points towards a continuous process, assimilating various signifiers that continually change the meaning of already present signifiers in an endless loop. This results in fluid subjectivities whose meanings are always in flux and are continually reworked.

3.6.1. Pre-Oedipal Phase

In conventional psychoanalysis, Freud proposed a pre-oedipal phase of dual relationship between the mother and the child which he called a phase of psychosocial development before the genesis of Oedipus complex (Evans, 2006). In this phase, the child's early experiences of being one with the mother are filled with joyous moments when his needs are met without delays. This undivided status of the subject in the jubilance of oneness with the first other is what Lacan terms as mythic "Jouissance of Being,". Chiesa (2007) argues that Lacan never endorsed diadic relationship between the child and the mother since such a

reciprocal relationship in which both the mother and the child fulfil each other's needs is unthinkable. Instead, he proposed that psychoanalytic structures are triangular and thus require the inclusion of at least a third element, the phallus-- an imaginary object that oscillates between the mother-child interactions. Lacan later termed this mythical pre-oedipal phase as the first moment of Oedipus Complex.

The pre-Oedipal phase of child's psychic development is tied with various object relations. At this time, the infant has not yet formed an idea of people as 'people' having an agency; but considers them as 'things'; however, it does experience these things' absence and presence, comings and goings. It has not yet perceived its mother as separate from itself which it gradually achieves late along with its sense of agency.

3.6.2. The Oedipus Complex

Oedipus complex is a significant but often misinterpreted concept in psychoanalysis which marks the child's entry into the Symbolic from the Imaginary Order (Homer, 2004). In its cliched Freudian form, it is understood as the child's desire for the parent of opposite sex and rivalry for the parent of the same sex; however, this is an overly simplistic understanding, beyond which lie deeper layers of meaning. In his groundbreaking article *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 1953). Freud postulates Oedipus complex as a journey from sexualization to de-sexualization of parents that involves bodies, desires, fantasies and forbidden pleasures and culminates in the attainment of a distinct social and sexual identity, both in boys and girls. At the same time, the transition is agonizing, marked with anxieties and frustrations which turns an untamed desire into a civilized acceptance, though the latter never stops aching due to its unsatisfiable nature. In addition to maturation, the Oedipus complex forms the basis of one's psychic or unconscious life which will continue to influence and regulate the succeeding years (Nasio, 2010).

Lacan regarded various interpretations of Freudian Oedipus Complex in vogue as overly literalized and reductive i.e the infamous ideas of penis envy, castration anxiety etc, which seem to gravitate towards real parents and real castration threats. In contrast, he provides a more formalized structural and linguistic account of the Oedipus Complex that attempts to single out the underlying components which are able to explain the countless small empirical details, and avoid the stylized reductionism; however, there are moments when he refers to the structures of Oedipus Complex in the Freudian sense; for instance, occasionally, a phallus may not be a signifier but a real object, penis. Therefore, it is important to not completely discard the Freudian literalized understanding of the Oedipus Complex and keep it in the background while dealing with the Lacanian version of Oedipus Complex. Derek Hook (2006) explains:

> Oedipus complex is for Lacan a means of explaining the child's passage from the narcissism of the pre-verbal, erotic and symbiotic (i.e. Imaginary) relationship with the mother into a properly social existence defined by the structures of language and social law (i.e. the Symbolic.) This requires a repudiation of the mother as a love object, and the submission of the child's desire to law, as it is represented in the figure of the father. It is at this point that the child grasps the fundamental operations of language. (p. 75)

The "Oedipal" phase entails inflicting a dilemma on the infant's exponentially growing consciousness, which necessitates an adaptation to a social system that demands a belittling of the mother in order to progress in the society. Rejection of the mother in response to the prohibitions set by the father is the very blueprint of its competitive social thriving. Failure to detach itself form the mother and its care results in an unsuccessful resolution of Oedipus Complex.

For Lacan, Oedipus Complex enables a child to symbolically *individuate* itself as a subject. In his seminar IV, *The Object-Relations* (Lacan, 2021), Lacan introduces the three forms of absence of the object or "lack of object". The child is introduced to the "three logically

sequential ''stages'' of the Oedipus Complex, which work retroactively, by means of three different ''crises'': frustration, privation, and castration" after which, a lacking and desiring subject is established at the end of Oedipus Complex (Chiesa, 2008). In each of these moments, the subject assumes a unique kind of lack which is caused by a different agent and has a different object as outlined below.

AGENT	Lack	Object
Real Father	Symbolic castration	Imaginary Phallus
Symbolic Mother	Imaginary Frustration	Real Breast
Imaginary Father	Real Privation	Symbolic Phallus

Table 1: Three Lacks from Lacan(Lacan, 2021, p. 262)

The fundamental idea is that every object relation characteristically involves three components: the manner in which the object lacks, the lacking object and the agent of lack. Lacan identifies three presentations of object lack: *frustration, privation, castration* which are related to the three registers: Imaginary, Symbolic and Real and the three agents of lack. Romulo Lander (2006) in his description of the chart adds another dimension which he calls "environment of the lack" which includes need, demand and desire (p. 39). Below, I have detailed how these object lacks operate in the Oedipus Complex.

3.6.2.1. The *Lack* of Frustration

Frustration is an Imaginary lack of a Real object (i.e the mother's breast) which introduces the child into the first stage of Oedipus Complex. It centers on the first exchanges between the mother (the first other) and the child in which the former is held responsible for certain provisions, but the mother's role is seen as of omnipotence as "she is not simply the one who gives, but the one who is felt to decide to give" (Leader, 2011).

There are moments in the infants life when the mother is not there to answer his needs and this "disappearance can be experienced as an unbearable hole, or as a betrayal or abandonment that admits no explanation" (Leader, 2011). It is with the absence of mother and her failure to respond to the child pleas that panic sets in and "the original unpleasure becomes anxiety the moment that the other's response to the appeal fails" (Verhaeghe, 2008, p. 261). Interestingly, Lacan associates frustration with the demand for love, rather than the need, although he did not detach it from the real objects of bodily needs and their satisfaction i.e breast or a feeder. He asserts that these real objects quickly transform into stand-ins for mother's love, as "symbolic gifts .... [or] symbols of mother's love.... inscribed in the symbolic network of laws" (Evans, 2006, p. 70). The absence of mother triggers a sense of being wronged which continues after the need is satisfied later. The child questions the mother's absence which he is unable to attribute to anything and which causes extreme anxiety and frustration. The breaks in maternal attention lead the child to what Lacan calls the *enigma of mother's desire* (*che vuoi*) in which a child asks a series of questions. Where is the mother? Who am I for her? What is she up to?

The child then starts to form a series of hypotheses regarding the absence of the mother. It gradually perceives that the mother's desire is directed elsewhere i.e towards the phallus, and that it is not the object of her desire. At this moment, the child for the first time recognizes an absence or a lack both in itself and in the mother. The mother is already situated in the symbolic order and hence is a lacking/desiring being; had she been complete, she would not desire. The subject is also lacking because it cannot fully satisfy the mother's desire. What is lacking in both the cases is the imaginary phallus.

3.6.2.2. The *Lack* of Privation

Privation is the second kind of lack in the Real order caused by the Imaginary father which aims at symbolic phallus. For a certain period, the absence of mother remains a mystery for the child as he cannot comprehend its cause and resultantly experiences extreme anxiety. The child enters the second stage of Oedipus Complex, privation, the moment he finds answer to her absence, that she lacks a symbolic object/phallus, that the (m)other has an other, the (imaginary) father. The intrusion of the Imaginary father is a significant event as it thwarts the mother's access to the phallus and prohibits the subject's access to the mother via imposition of the law. In fact, the entrance of the father provides much needed comfort to the child and saves it from psychosis as it can now designate mother's distressing absence with something. However, the child then gets caught up in an aggressive relationship of rivalry with the Imaginary father because the latter wants control over the mother (Chiesa, 2007). The unmediated relationship between the mother and the child allows the child to assume that he can be the object of mother's desire, the phallus. Thus, it attempts to incarnate itself in the thing that the mother desires. In this identificatory phase of the oedipal process, notes Lacan, the child's desire is subservient to the desire of the mother.

> What the child is seeking, qua desire for desire, is to be able to satisfy the mother's desire, that is to say, 'to be or not to be' the object of the mother's desire. .... To please the mother ...it is necessary and sufficient to be the phallus. (Lacan, 2017, p. 175)

In other words, the child considers that it 'is' the phallus what the mother wants (Hartke, 2016, p. 903). However, it is important to consider the mother's perspective as well, along with the child's (Chiesa, 2007). For the mother, the 'whole' of the child represents a phallus rather than its mere penis and this is the point which provokes anxiety in the child since it sees the inadequacy of his penis to be an 'imperfect' substitute for the mother's imaginary phallus. The mother's desire for the phallus thus continues.

3.6.2.3. The *Lack* of Castration

The third kind of lack is Castration which is of an imaginary object in the symbolic and is caused by the Real father. The idea can be traced back to Freud concept of castration complex which he defined as the replacement of "one infantile theory (everyone has a penis) by a new one (females have been castrated)" (Evans, 2006, p. 22). The theory has varying implications for boys and girls; in the former, it leads to 'castration anxiety' or the fear of his penis cut off by the father, whereas in the latter, it engenders 'penis envy'- as an already castrated being, the girls desires a substitute in the form of a baby. For Freud, Castration has different roles for boys and girls in the Oedipus Complex. In the former's case, castration complex is the passage out of the Oedipus Complex whereby he gives up his desire for the mother. In the latter's case, it is the point of entry into the Oedipus Complex as she channels her desires towards the father, away from the mother because she sees her mother as the agent who deprived her of the penis (Freud, 1924). Initially Lacan's understanding of the term followed Freud (though he used the term Castration instead of Castration Complex) until his seminar 1956-7 in which he outlined castration as one of the three lacks (of object). He considered it as the culmination of Oedipus Complex for both the sexes (Evans, 2006).

In this stage, the Real father intercedes to show his possession of the phallus which he will not exchange. The child eventually realizes his inability to compete with the Real father and thus gives up becoming the phallus for the mother. In other words, the child abandons to be the phallus for the mother after realizing that the real father cannot be overpowered. This second (symbolic) identification of the child with the Real father — which could not happen in the second stage — is the resolution of Oedipus Complex and the installation of a lack in the subject. Here, the subject leaves behind the aggressivity of the first (imaginary) identification. In this sense, every subject, therefore, is a subject of lack (Homer, 2004), marked with instabilities, uncertainties and insecurities, and becomes as such only by virtue of the lack-

installing acts. Lacan asserts that castration "means that jouissance has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire" (Lacan, 2006, p. 700)

3.7. Subjectivation in Diaspora

After elucidating the complex Lacanian schema, I now turn to the main argument of this study i.e. the parallels between Lacanian and diasporic *subjectivation* which engenders diasporic subjects that inherently lack and thus perpetually desire home. In the continued expansion of psychoanalysis, Lacan's theories, mainly related to identity construction and subjectivity, have been used in management and organization studies (Arnaud & Vanheule, 2007, 2013; Hoedemaekers, 2010; Jones & Spicer, 2005; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2005), in geography (Callard, 2003; Philo & Parr, 2003; Pile, 1996), and in film studies (Clarke, 2005; Copjec, 1989; McGowan, 2012; McGowan & Kunkle, 2020). These and others (Fink, 1995) have revealed the potential of Lacan's notion of subjectivity, rooted in lack and desire, for the analysis of a range of disciplines. However, Lacan's application in the field of migration, and to the study of loss of home in particular, has remained sparse, despite its ability to provide insights into migrant subjectivities. With regard to migration, it is not until recently that a nexus has been forged between migration studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis where the potential of Lacan's key concepts has been explored. To illustrate, Shubin et al. (2014) have used Lacan's concepts of subjectivity, lack and fantasy to study the identity formation of Latvian migrant workers and the 'unachievable figure of the 'ideal' worker' (p. 466). In another study, Yang (2018), using Lacan's concept of lack, has explored the tension between Singaporean government's desire to invite 'foreign talent' — a synonym he uses for immigrants — and the Singaporean local's disregard for such a move for being unjust and betraying. With respect to home, David Lim's (2005) examines desire as a longing to belong to an 'elusive home' in Ben Okri and K.S. Maniam's fiction, using Lacan, Zizek, Laclau and Mauffe as his theoretical

frameworks. However, his chief objective, unlike mine, is to investigate love and hate relationships among forced migrants in a heterogenous community, and their adoption or rejection of societal diversity. Indeed, these studies have shed light on some aspects of Lacanian theory, but what they have achieved is a vignette of the possibilities of Lacan's work and its full potential still remains unexplored.

My theorization of diasporic lack of home using Lacanian lack presents numerous opportunities of looking at diasporic mobilities across different borders and cultures. It also offers critical examination of diaspora's ties with their home and host cultures in the wake of changing subjectivities, spaces and cultures. Venn's (2009, 2010) analysis is quite relevant for my purposes as it regards subjectivity, in particular diasporic subjectivity, as fluctuating and unstable which requires re-construction or re-subjectivation in response to the changing dynamics of their surroundings. In this sense, diasporic subjectivity acquires transformative properties and is always engaged in a dynamic process of becoming (Collins, 2018). The situation applies to diaspora as they are dislocated and thrown into a new symbolic realm of hostland with its own laws and cultures; their subjectivities are mutated, and a re-occurrence of the subjectivation process is obligatory in order to re-establish their subjectivity. I argue that diasporic re-subjectivation follows Lacan's three sequential stages entailing three lacks or moments of (Oedipal) crisis. Since "every adult loss reactivates the originary loss—the loss of das Ding (the Thing)" (Allen & Ruti, 2019, p. 7), this re-subjectivation process, triggered by the diasporic lack of home, inevitably alludes to the primary process of subjectivation, to the primordial split of the subject from the mother in Lacan's Mirror Image stage (Mishra, 2007), a "third individuation' (Akhtar, 1995), and an "Oedipal crossing of a cultural kind" (González, 2016, p. 20). The process, likewise, is not chronological but logical and there is constant in and out movement and overlap in these stages. A strict correlation of a human and diasporic

subjectivation process, especially between the agents and the objects of lacks is neither intended nor desired; however, the approximates are inevitably existent.

The first stage, *frustration*, occurs when diaspora are forced, by violence or lack of opportunity to leave their homes. This absence of home is identical to the absence of the mother in Lacan first stage of Oedipus Complex and is a cause of extreme anxiety and frustration. In other words, the diasporic separation from home(land) results in a distance and therefore, in the absence of love, despite the availability of essential biological needs in the hostland. Conversely, these feelings are absent in diaspora prior to separation (Akhtar, 1995; Papadopoulos, 2002) which is identical to Lacan's mythical pre-oedipal moment in which the child is complete and do not lack anything.

In the second stage namely *privation*, the host culture intervenes as an incongruous entity as Lacan's father intervenes in the mother-child relationship. What is significant at this stage is that the host culture — a substitute for father — starts exerting its influence on the migrant which results in diasporic rivalry with the host culture. The migrant feels discomfort with the new landscape, foods, customs and traditions of the hostland and falls victim to nostalgia. Reactively, he feels aversion towards the hostland and constructs a homeland via memory, food practices, formulating a homeland community and participating in their gatherings. This accords with the second stage of Berry's (1997, 2015) model of acculturation namely 'separation', in which the host culture is rejected by the migrants.

Finally, the third phase of castration involves giving up rivalry and hatred towards the hostland and resorting to acculturative practices. This is in line with Lacanian subject's castration by the father which resolves Oedipus Complex and forms a lacking subject. This diasporic castration bars their access to their originally lost home, initiating a dialogue between lack and desire; however, their structural lack cannot be fulfilled due to the irreversible nature of separation. Nonetheless, the desire forces the subjectivized diasporic subjects to resort to

creativity and pursue various fantasy homes, aided by the fantasy function, in the numerous abodes of their displacement.

Extending my argument further, I posit that the mirror exchanges between the subject and others i.e. people and objects, transfer the latters' lacks into the subject's unconscious during the subjectivation process. In the context of this study, this suggests that the lacks of the first diasporic generations are transferred to the subsequent generations during their subjectivation, irrespective of whether the latter experienced dislocation or not. The idea of trans-generational transfer is already detailed in chapter 2 with reference to a number of theorists whose explorations, in their peculiar contexts, have revealed the possibilities of inter- and trans-generational transfer of gaps, traumas or hauntings (Berthin, 2010; Kogan, 2012; Mannino et al., 2019; Mariotti, 2012; Mishra, 2007; Munos, 2013). This serves as the starting point of my argument; however, what distinguishes my stance is that I consider this trans-generational transfer as a transmission of nothing else but lacks of the preceding generation and I locate the occurrence of this exchange in Lacan's subjectivation process.

3.8. Creativity, Psychoanalysis, and Lacan

The study's constant reference to creativity requires some theorizing of the concept since it is an extensively vast topic (Glăveanu & Kaufman, 2019). In its simplest form, it involves a re-formulation of the existing phenomena into an entirely different whole (Ingold & Hallam, 2007; Liep, 2001). In the process, disparate and scattered elements are split from their former forms and are brought together in a novel way, giving them distinct identities and their own unique features. However, such a simplistic view of creativity will unequivocally be delusional as it excludes the contextual and cultural factors. Undoubtably, creativity happens in a context and draws support from or is impeded by the interaction of individual, social and cultural factors (Kwan & Liou, 2018; Liep, 2001). To quote from Glaveanu et al. (2020),"we

create not as isolated minds but as embodied beings who participate in a socio-material world" (p. 2). However, in the backdrop of postmodernism, the very edifice of culture, as a static structure and a bag of values and traditions where alien cultures are set aside, has been liquidated. Resultantly, creativity now lies in inventing new formulations by mixing up different cultural ideas, models and art forms in a continuously uninterrupted process. In order to trace provinces and spaces which provide conducive conditions for creativity, one needs to look for instances and circumstances which allow mingling of various world views, traditions and contours of expression. Such conditions are inevitably latent in diasporic migrations and displacement where the apertures in and nebulousness of the social and cultural life drive various culturally discordant migrant groups to innovate and find out meanings in newer forms.

The nexus between lack/loss and creativity dates back to antiquity, latent in various dichotomies i.e "nothingness and being, lack and creativity, loss and renewal, negativity and affirmation" which underwent significant transformations over the course of its evolution (Allen & Ruti, 2019, p. 31). It crossed into psychoanalytic tradition, with Freud laying its foundations via the study of a poet's mind and dreamwork. His short essay "Creative writers and day-dreaming" (Freud, 1959) explores how the intensity of present experience(s) takes the poet backward in time, to his/her lost childhood and then is born a poetic piece, a wish fulfilled. Subsequently, Freud came to regard creativity as an outlet for our libidinal energy in artistic and socially acceptable forms, a phenomenon he termed *sublimation* (Richman, 2014). He illustrated creativity in his analysis of fort-da game in which the child tries to negotiate the mother' absence via propelling and recouping the string reel. Adam Phillips (Phillips, 2000) asserts that by playing the game, the child is not merely trying to lessen his sufferings emanating from mother's absence; instead, the game provides him an opportunity to "find another pleasure... not only the ascetic pleasure of instinctual renunciation, but the pleasure of symbolization itself; the delight of making up the game" (pp. 120–121). The fort-da therefore,

is not only a mere strategy for the child to assuage or administer pain but an opportunity to "discover artistry and the pleasure of symbolization, indeed, to invent an alternative mode of being in the world" (Ruti, 2010, p. 120). Jonathan Lear (2009) comments on the significance of the game ,without which "the pressure would just break through and the child would be overcome with fright or flooded with anxiety". It is for this reason that Freud found resemblance between an artist and a neurotic because both resort to imaginary world in order to cope with the agonizing transformation from the pleasure principle to the reality principle. But only the artist remains successful in conflict resolution whereas "the neurotic [remains] incapable of sublimation" (Richman, 2014, p. 33)

Later thinkers provided their own, sometime overlapping, versions of the workings of the creative processes latent in the unconscious, the libido, and the loss (Adams, 2018; Caldwell, 2018; Fromm, 2014; Goldstein, 2013). Within this heterogenous theorizing of creativity, Lacan put forward the idea of lack ingrained in subjectivation. The Lacanian inter-relation of lack and creativity has been detailed by Ruti in her conversation with Allen (2019) where both agree that in spite of disparate theorizing of the concept of lack, Lacan and Klein concur that "at the root of creativity resides lack or loss ... [and] creativity can't be dissociated from the loss of the first object of psychic, affective, and bodily cathexis" (p. 157). More exactly, Ruti in an earlier work (2010) draws this connection by saying:

> Our lack and our creative capacities hence operate in tandem: it is because we lack that we are prompted to create and it is through our creative activity that we manage, in however provisional a manner, to fill — and therefore to give concrete form to — our lack (pp. 49-50)

By extending this argument, I argue that diasporic lack of home, installed in diaspora during their subjectivation process, functions as an impetus of creativity for diaspora. The

diasporic encounters with cultural incongruities and incoherencies in the hostland disrupt their subjectivities and necessitate subjectivation or homemaking—the finding of new ways of achieving consistency and harmony. A tenuous link has already been established in which several psychoanalytic scholars have attempted to draw attention to the possibilities of creativity latent in diasporic displacements/migrations in an effort to alter the conventional thinking pertaining to migration as a traumatic and psychically damaging experienc (Akhtar, 1995; González, 2016). For instance, Akhtar (1995) argues that migration " alongside the various losses is a renewed opportunity for psychic growth and alteration" (p. 1052). In a later work, Akhtar (2011) asserts that "the combined force of pain and remorse therefore can give rise to remarkable creative output. One's mind becomes the fertile *motherland of ideas* in a reparative identification with the idealized artistic productivity of the lost country" (p. 16). Similarly, Francisco González (2016) sees immigration and thereby, displacement, as a psychologically "fertile ground of creativity, the strange place where something new can come into being" (p. 15). Such accounts mainly rely on Freudian theories of *mourning* or *sublimation* in which creativity appears as an outcome of defense mechanisms which are activated while encountering a loss. The creative acts transform one's grief into signification by means of which the pain of loss is attenuated. In this way, creativity becomes an effective and gratifying manner of dealing with one's losses. Indeed, these accounts bolster my argument considerably and serve as a starting point; however, I depart from these approaches by locating creativity in Lacanian lack which, as I have argued in this chapter, is a structural condition of humanity, and by extension of diaspora and not a defense mechanism. Such an approach makes creativity an unavoidable modus operandi to maneuver in the socio-symbolic world by means of which the diasporic subjects can only manage, not eliminate, their pain by provisional homemaking. Such an approach emphasizes the achievement of permanent harmony in the hostland as a fable and

a false disguise of the ego and demands giving up "the pursuit of a cure" (Allen & Ruti, 2019, p. 163).

The best way to manage pain for a lacking diasporic subject is to recognize its ontological insecurity and insufficiency, caused by the constitutive lack or loss of home. As Horrocks (1997) asserts that "it is not that the I is permanently dissatisfied, but that the 'I' is constituted *by*, and *as*, dissatisfaction", the diasporic 'I' is also the outcome of a re-subjectivation process, is also lacking and, thus "permanently longs to 'go home', to become one again" (p. 69). Therefore, instead of searching for a unitary self and coherent lives — which will be a denial of the very condition of diasporic existence —the diaspora must see "insecurity as an existential predicament" and find something productive to cope with this intrinsic incoherence (Ruti, 2010, p. 4-5). Owing to this impossibility of a stable self, the diaspora cannot be the architects of their lives, but to a great extent, can control their moves in response to the outside influences by channeling their pain and suffering into various creative acculturative practices. Instead of falling victims to anxieties and traumas, they can negotiate with their unconscious to find possibilities of healthy living, moving " from a passive repetition of the past to an active working through of this past" (Ruti, 2010, p. 8). In this sense, diasporic migration provides a great opportunity to know the unconscious processes and unleash one's creative potentials to avoid any breakdowns. Nonetheless, it is very difficult for the subject, and by extension for diaspora, to acknowledge the lack within since it is experienced as a distressing and painful wound which shall be cured or avoided.

What is significant to mention here is that creativity not only lies in master art works, in the scientific laboratories or in ateliers but can be found everywhere around us (Fiumara, 2013). The mundane transactions of different cultural groups in a diasporic space offer innumerable possibilities of diasporic creativity where constant negotiations among disparate worldviews, ideas and traditions take place. In these encounters, the ceaseless fusion of

elements from home and host cultures engenders newer cultural and subcultural forms of quotidian life (Liep 2001), including 'what we do in the course of everyday life'(Allen & Ruti, 2019, p. 159).i.e cuisine and culinary practices, rituals, dress, and dance as a mode of resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen 2015; Williams 2007). These forms neither are facsimiles of the home nor of the host culture but are creative syntheses of the former's and the latter's endless reciprocations. These innovative cultural configurations fall under the 'mini-c' or 'ordinary genius' conception of creativity— contrary to 'Big-C' or 'exceptional genius' creativity which entails grand creative works of artists, musicians, painters, filmmakers etc— (Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2019, p. 29). Instigated by the *lack* of home, these mini-c creative endeavors of diaspora facilitate their creative acculturation, failing which, the loss of home remains unresolved and causes chronic disorders, anxieties, or other various forms of trauma.

3.9. Acculturation, Homemaking and Subjectivation

Throughout the study, I have been referring to acculturation, homemaking, and subjectivation interchangeably to refer to creative acts resulting from the lack of home. I understand acculturation as diaspora's attempt to achieve a 'sense of home' in the hostland in a conflicting and diverse cultural environment. At the same time, I have argued in this chapter that home is constitutive of subjectivities and homemaking involves undergoing a process of subject formation. Therefore, acculturation, homemaking and subjectivation become interchangeable terms as they refer to a single phenomenon, that is achieving a provisional sense of home.

The concept of acculturation has been discussed in a number of fields including sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, psychology etc to describe the dynamics of movement from one culture to another. Predominantly, it refers to the phenomena when two different groups of people come into continued contact with each other, causing cultural and psychological

changes in either or both groups (Berry, 2015; Redfield et al., 1936). The cultural acculturation entails changes in the cultural settings of a group whereas psychological acculturation denotes the changes occurring within the individual (Berry, 2003; C. Ward, 2001; C. A. Ward et al., 2001).

Two theoretical perspectives are significant to the discussion of acculturation. There is the tradition of social psychology, spearheaded by Berry and colleagues, which sees migrants' integration into the host culture via a series of phases that culminate in a permanent settlement. Whereas Berry's model explores the variety of factors that influence acculturation, critics of this model, mainly cultural and diaspora theorists (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Hall, 1990) offer counterargument to the claims of universal psychological experiences for migrants. In critiquing the universal model of Berry, Bhatia and Ram argue that it belittles the injustices of various dominant groups against the oppressed and marginalized non-European communities.

Initially, acculturation was considered a unidimensional process in which migrants were required to abandon the home culture in his/acquisition of host culture (Gordon, 1964). The migrants embarked on their journey with the preference of home culture which gradually sapped its strength upon repeated cultural contact paving the way for 'straight-line assimilation' (Schildkraut, 2007). However, the model failed to acknowledge the changes in the host society in its contact with diverse cultural groups and the changes taking place within the individual (Kim & Berry, 1985). The shortcomings of the unidirectional model prompted the inception of bi-dimensional acculturation models. Cultural psychologists discovered that acculturation in the hostland does not necessitate a complete surrender of the home culture values and traditions; instead, migrant groups can retain their cultural identity while interacting with the host culture (Berry, 1980). Berry proposed a model of acculturation (1997) that places heritage-culture and receiving-culture face to face creating four distinct categories namely *assimilation* (embracing the host culture and denouncing the home culture), *separation*

(spurning the host culture and holding on to the home culture), *integration* (adopting the host culture and preserving the home culture), and *marginalization* (dismissing both the home and the host cultures). Out of these, the best acculturation strategy is integration, also termed as bi-culturalism (Berry & Sam, 1997). Despite the widespread popularity, Berry's model has been criticized for its 'one size fits all' approach (Chirkov, 2009) which suggests all migrants undergo a similar process of acculturation, regardless of their diverse cultural, ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Moreover, Berry's model decidedly assumes a positive and welcoming role of the host society which is not always the case (Weinreich, 2009). In reaction to this model, a dialogical model of acculturation has been proposed which argues for accommodating various interacting cultures and identities in a continuous process (Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Bhatia and Ram contend that dialogical model of acculturation is the only practicable choice for the modern globalized world.

As discussed earlier, diasporic subjectivity is in a constant state of 'becoming' and never complete; in other words, it is in a dynamic state of acculturation continually making adjustments in response to an ever-changing cultural surround and constructing on-the-move-homes. This sense of acculturation corresponds to the dialogical sense of the term as opposed to uni-dimensional or bi-dimentional understandings of the concept. This complex creative process of acculturative change positions diaspora face to face in relation to a different surround, people, foods and customs. The acculturative creativity is performed via various acculturative strategies whose use and intensity varies according to various factors, for instance, age at the time of dislocation, the strength of affinity with the homeland, the volition in opting to dislocate, advanced preparatory measures for the change, the ability to endure this rupture, and the extent of variance between the homeland and the hostland (Akhtar, 2011; González, 2016).

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my framework of analysis by drawing upon Jacques Lacan's concept of *lack* and its implications for diasporic acculturation via creativity. I have argued that there exist parallels between Lacanian and diasporic subjectivation processes which happens via three Oedipal moments of crisis namely *frustration, privation* and *castration*. The resultant diasporic subject is a lacking subject desirous of home which always remains a beyond, an impossible paradise; however, the lack awakens the creative potential of diaspora and helps them acculturate in the hostland. The endless journey of the diasporic subject continues moving from station to station in search of a destiny which never arrives; however, during the process, hundreds of possibilities await to be explored with a prerequisite suffering as a necessary condition.

I have also suggested that a gratifying diasporic life full of plenitude and devoid of any sufferings—which is a fundamental human wish—is an impossibility which contradicts the very essence of their being, a being marked by a structural 'lack'. Therefore, any effort to achieve stability or to fill the lack is bound to meet failure since the lack by its very nature is unfulfillable. However, the endless insufficiencies of diaspora- or in other words, their lacks, awaken their inner potentials and provide them fertile grounds to exercise their capabilities. Thus, the best approach for diaspora to handle this problem is to try to understand this lack and consider the pains and sufferings emanating from it as opportunities to build their futures.

CHAPTER 4

LACK OF HOME AND SUBJECTIVATION IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*

This chapter investigates my second (*How do the selected novels manifest the Lacanian lack in their character's desire for home?)* and third research question (How *does the diasporic lack of home act as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, resulting in a perpetual desire for homemaking or acculturation?)* I have analyzed Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* from the perspective of diasporic *lack* of home, the shattering of characters' subjectivities in displacement and their continuous *re-subjectivation,* and the creativity that results from the process. The lack of home triggers characters' desire and induces an endless pursuit of home, thus becoming a stimulant of innovation via creative practices of *homemaking* in America. In this analysis, my focus mainly remains on the protagonist Ashima and her son Gogol; however, her husband Ashoke is also brought under discussion wherever relevant.

4.1. The Story

Jhumpa Lahiri's debut novel *The Namesake* employs itself to the subject of diasporic migrations and the questions of home, the losses and gains of the migratory processes, and the dynamics of settlement in the hostlands. It presents shifting patterns of Indian diasporic movements after the collapse of British colonial rule when skilled professionals started migrating towards the developed countries for better jobs and lifestyles, contrary to the pre-colonial and colonial diasporic movements of trade and indentured labors. The story has autobiographical undertones as it stems from Lahiri's own experiences of rupture and homemaking in foreign cultures (Rothstein, 2000). In an interview, she testifies that she has never found herself belonging to a single place and has always felt herself part of the two worlds, "of this and of that" at the same time (The Diane Rehm Show, 2013). The novel

encapsulates Ashima's journey of dislocation and shattering of subjectivity and her struggles to cope with the inharmoniously exotic culture of America, concomitantly trying to acknowledge the significance of her home. Moreover, it also deals with the transfer of dislocation experience—which I call ancestral *lack* of home— to the second-generation migrant, from Ashoke and Ashima to their son Gogol.

The story is constructed around the voluntary dislocation of Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli from Bengal, India. The protagonist Ashima marries Ashoke, a PhD student at M.I.T and a future professor of engineering, and then migrates to America where both raise a family of two children, the son Gogol and the daughter Sonia. Through her character, Lahiri demonstrates the customary migratory shock and the initial resistance of migrants in domesticating themselves in the hostland—in this case America— and a display of deep-seated yearning for home. Initially, Ashima undergoes the customary period of migratory shock and appears antagonistic to American culture displaying a deep-seated yearning for home but later functions as a synthetic bridge between India and America, much to the dislike of her children. Oftentimes, the novel refers to the sacred Bengali practice of naming, the Indian foods, rituals and traditions as signifiers of lost home. Ashima is not only antagonistic to American culture herself, but disapproves of her children growing up immersed in it, forgetful of their Indian origins. Resultantly, she tries to function as a synthetic bridge between India and America, much to the dislike of her children. Her husband Ashoke's tragic and sudden death comes as a piercing shock, devastating her being to the core; yet it nurtures her self-reliance. Towards the end of the novel, she undergoes a complete transformation by accepting American lifestyle, her children's life choices and the manifold nature of her home. She divides her time between her two worlds, by deciding to spend six months in India and six in America, and becomes a true Ashima, meaning "without borders" (p. 276).

The most important aspect of the novel is the tradition of naming the first-born child, Gogol. Lahiri reveals that Bengali identity is ingrained in the highly intricate and sacred tradition of naming the child with a 'good name'— a *bhalonam* (an official name used outside the family) and the 'pet name'— a *daknam* (used within the family circles). According to this tradition, the pet names are the child's first identity and are the ones by which Bengali children are "adored and scolded and missed and loved" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 26). Contrary to this, good names have a rare presence in the family circles and "no parent ever called a child by his good name" (p. 165). The good name shall be provided by the elders of the family and Ashima and Ashoke decide to give this honor to the former's grandmother; however, her letter containing the name never arrives and is lost in the transit, foreshadowing the namesake's future life. Compelled by the formalities of registration, the child is given Gogol as his pet name, after his father's favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. Ashoke has memories associated with the latter as he was rescued from a train accident due to a copy of Nikolai Gogol's story *The overcoat* which he held in his hand and which helped the rescuers identify his body buried in the wreckage. From then onwards, the Russian writer's name and the short story *overcoat* are inscribed in the mind of Ashoke as remnants of a traumatic episode in his life which is passed on to his son. For Gogol, the name remains an enigmatic presence of Ashoke's past, leading him to experience the latter's misery. In addition, it also becomes an oddity in the American culture resulting in humiliation and mockery for Gogol. In his kindergarten, Gogol is given a good name 'Nikhil' prompted by the school legalities which he dislikes at first; however, in order to get rid of his Indian identity, he later adopts it legally as his official name due to its greater resemblance with the American names. His satisfaction with the name 'Nikhil' declines as he finds a mismatch between his newly acquired name and his original identity. Towards the end, after the sudden death of his father due to heart-attack, Gogol develops a sense of

belonging to his heritage and finds satisfaction in his father's memories by reading Nikolai Gogol's stories as his father used to do.

4.2. Subjectivation in the First Generation

The Namesake (2003) exhibits an interesting interplay of the characters' feeling of loss of home in an alien culture and their myriad creative ways of responding to their losses. The splitting of characters from their motherland is an incarnation of Lacanian subject's split from the mother in the Mirror Image Stage who searches from thence after for the lost unity. The characters of the novel, particularly Ashima and Gogol, display a desire to attain the blissful union with the lost *object a* home. I have traced their *subjectivation* in line with my description of Lacanian subjectivation in chapter 3. For Ashima, the process entails splitting from home (a Lacanian other) and the three logically sequential stages involving three lacks or (Oedipal) crisis moments. However, since Gogol does not experience splitting from home first-hand, his subjectivation is reliant on the transfer of parental lack via mirror encounters.

4.2.1. Pre-Oedipal *Jouissance* of Unity with India

Preoedipal *Jouissance* refers to the mythical pre-Oedipal moment of perfect unity between the child and the mother where there is no want and fear (Chiesa, 2007). Although Lahiri does not dedicate greater space to this period of pre-oedipal jouissance, Ashima does enjoy it before her migration to America. It can be easily deduced from Ashima's moments of anxiety and suffering in America which clearly testify that the sense of alienation now experienced was absent before her migration. The foods of Calcutta, the family networks and unions and the traditions and all other absences were presences prior to her split from home. This pre-Oedipal jouissance is lost and is forever sought when she marries and migrates to America along with her husband Ashoke.

4.2.2. Frustration: The Absence of India and its Cognates

Identical to the absence of mother in Lacan's first moment of crisis in the Oedipus Complex, the absence of home causes the first kind of lack namely *frustration* for Ashima. In the novel, the dual relationship of mother and child is substituted with India and Ashima respectively. Ashima's departure from India after her marriage is frustrating as she cannot imagine a life without the large network of familial relationships which made her a whole. This split creates an absence of love — of the homeland, of the extended family relations and the Bengali traditions — despite the provision of fundamental needs in America. She longs for the signifiers of love offered in plenty when she was in India like the large family gatherings, the foods and the rituals. This absence of markers of mother(land)'s love provokes feelings of anxiety. In the opening scene, Lahiri succinctly captures Ashima's frustration when the latter senses " as usual, there's something missing" in America (Lahiri, 2006, p. 1) and when "nothing feels normal to her... nothing normal at all" (pp. 5-6). The lack of normalcy originates from the unfamiliar environment and the unacquainted world of America which is at odds with the environment of her brought-up and the landscapes she has incorporated as part of her being. Her cravings for Calcutta and its foods and her longings for family relations signify a deep-seated yearning for home. Resultantly, she is overwhelmed by a sense of alienation and estrangement in the new environment; in the hospital, she sleeps alone for the first time in her life "surrounded by strangers" (p. 3) and is visited by acquaintances only — unlike Bengali childbirths where the family members surround the baby — which makes the childbirth a mere fantasy. Lahiri writes:

> For as grateful as she feels for the company of the Nandis and Dr. Gupta, these acquaintances are only substitutes for the people who really ought to be surrounding them. Without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's

birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true. (p. 25)

Similarly, these feelings are manifest in Ashima's comparison of pregnancy and foreignness metaphors. She considers both as identical states provoking homogenous feelings that resuscitate memories of home and the sense of alienation. Being a foreigner is tantamount to a perpetual pain-pleasure predicament, and a constant wait for the lost home, analogous to the wait of the birth of a child. The narrator gives us insight into Ashima's mind when she thinks:

> For being a foreigner Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy -- a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been an ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. (pp. 49-50)

The states of pregnancy and foreignness involve strange mix of feelings, of the lost past and the coming future. Ashima continues to be entranced by this comparison as she thinks "that it was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved" (p. 6). Latent in Lahiri's portrayal of Ashima is her double burden; on the one hand, she is suffering the way all mothers suffer during childbirth whereas on the other, she is doing this in a remote part of the world away from the family where it will be her responsibility alone to maintain a connection with the past. In other words, what is normal for other women becomes abnormal for homeless Ashima.

4.2.3. Privation: Rivalry with America and Attachment to India

Privation initiates a relationship of rivalry with the hostland— a stand-in for the Name-Of-The-Father and a desire to re-unite with the motherland. In the novel, Ashima feels the ascendent impact of American culture and consequently develops an aggressive rivalry with it,

identical to a Lacanian subject. Even after spending eighteen months in America, she is unable to forge a bond with the American culture and is uncomfortable with the new surrounds, the foods and the customs which subsequently transform into an attitude of disapproval and hatred. As a would-be mother, she is troubled by "motherhood in a foreign land" and is "terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 6). She compels Ashoke to finish his degree and return to India because she does not "want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It's not right. [she] want[s] to go back." (p. 33). She pitties her son because "she has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived. (p. 25).

On the other hand, she endeavors to retain her link with the homeland, her lingual and cultural comfort zone via a multitude of cultural and social practices. In order to make her lack bearable, her *fantasy* enables her to fantasize the possibility of regaining the lost home, thus propelling an engagement with the signifiers of lost home. In other words, fantasy functions as a defense mechanism against her *lack* by offering a fictitious mode of accessing the surplus enjoyment or *jouissance and* enables her to sustain its desire. These practices pacify her frustration and provide relief from the crisis of identity and unbelonging and thus acquire a healing power as they anchor her to the places left behind.

Among the range of practices, naming conventions are an important way of adherence to home culture. Names undoubtedly are cultural universals which exist across all human societies, irrespective of their geography or time. In the words of Geertz (1973, p 363), naming is a crucial aspect of converting "anybodies" into "somebodies", signifying its importance for identity construction. In the context of migration, names play very important but contrasting roles; they are an important means of asserting one's identity but simultaneously are denotative of oddity and disgrace due to their deviation from the norm. In her analysis of names and name-changes in American context, Tummala-Narra (2016) asserts:

> A name often signifies fantasies, wishes, and fears rooted in family and social histories. In the context of migration, names and changes in names across time and generations implicate cultural adjustment, ethnic identity, transition from "foreigner" or "other" to "American," loss of heritage culture, and the hope of re-making identity. (p. 151)

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri shows the sanctity and uniqueness attached to the practice and use of naming in the Bengali tradition. Ashoke and Ashima decide that their baby is to be named by Ashima's grandmother in conformity with the Bengali tradition and it is unimaginable to do otherwise. Even in times of necessity or urgency, as is the case in the novel, the couple is reluctant to name the child themselves when it is required for birth certificate. Moreover, names are associated with Bengali traditions of respect, especially rooted in the negotiation of sex relations, and revealing the structures of power. A Bengali wife is not expected to call her husband with his name and instead uses alternatives, often pronouns. Ashima. Therefore, avoids enunciating her husband's name out of respect in consonance with Bengali tradition because "like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 2).

Secondly, cuisine and culinary practices are important means of remembering and experiencing home in the hostland for diaspora. Schuster (2021) argues that "for migrants, food is a powerful symbolic representation of home, community and a way of life left behind" (p. 386). Similarly, the Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat observes that "every meal is a reminder that we are not at home" (Mirabal & Danticat, 2007, p. 26). Food permeates the mundane realities of human life and is profoundly embedded in everyday practices that unify family, home and relationships. When people are dislocated from their homes and become part of a diaspora, food journeys along with them in conjunction with their language and culture, and serves to safeguard their heritage, helps to define, create and re-create diasporic identities and strengthen communal ties. Moreover, the diasporic nostalgia for the motherland also entails

a longing for the familiar smells and tastes left behind. In this sense, food becomes a symbolic object in *The Namesake* inducing nostalgia of the lost past that anchors Ashima to her homeland. She attempts to assert her distinct identity as an Indian by duplicating Indian cuisine in her American kitchen by combining various ingredients. Throughout her pregnancy, she longs to eat the food that was sold on Calcutta sidewalks. Moreover, during the *annaprasan* ceremony, she serves the Indian foods to her guests; "the biryani, the carp in yoghurt sauce, the dal, the six different vegetable dishes" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 39). These meals are imbued with eating, sharing and talking about food which provides Ashima opportunities to recall memories of Bengal, of families and of communities and thus perform a synthesizing role.

Besides foods and naming traditions, Bengali rituals, dress and language are some other ways that help Ashima keep her connection alive with the homeland. The ritual of Gogol's *annaprasan* is a fine example of Ashima attempting to reincarnate India in America. This is the first formal ritual for a Bengali child in which it consumes solid food for the first time, other than milk. Further, during the ceremony, she dresses herself in typical Bengali silvery sari "with the sleeves of her blouse reaching the crook of her elbow" whereas Ashoke "wears a transparent white Punjabi top over bell-bottom trousers" (p. 39). Lahiri also gives an elaborate description of Gogol's attire who is "dressed as an infant Bengali groom, in a pale yellow pajama-punjabi from his grandmother in Calcutta ... His tiny forehead has been decorated ... with sandalwood paste to form six miniature beige moons floating above his brows" (p. 39). Along with the dress, Bengali language is seen as an essential element in keeping the younger generations connected with the Bengali culture. It unsettles Ashima and Ashoke to see their children speaking American language sounding "just like Americans" (p. 65). Therefore, when Gogol reaches third grade, he is sent to Bengali language and culture lessons where he learns about Bengali language, its culture and history. However, despite these efforts, Ashima worries that her children are disconnected from India and its Bengali traditions. These habitudes are

emblematic of identity and protective of cultural heritage whose ritualistic nature grants a re-living of the past and of the lost home.

4.2.4. Castration: Acculturation and Homemaking

Castration entails renouncing the dissension previously developed against the hostland and coming into being as a lacking and desiring subject who engages in homemaking practices. These practices are creative in nature which stem from the lack of home and the desire to return and hinge on the everyday cultural affairs, entailing newer forms of living, either entirely fresh or distorted or enhanced versions of the previous. These mini-c activities may appear trivial at the outset but are, in fact, crucibles of creativity. In the novel, Ashima is castrated after the few initial months of *frustration* and *privation* where the dominant influence of unfamiliar environment, the people, and the traditions necessitate giving up rivalry with the American culture. Her homemaking is hugely contingent on the re-formation of her diasporic subjectivity as the outcome of a deeply traumatizing but creative lack-generating process. She along with her husband Ashoke, makes conscious efforts to immerse herself in the once foreign culture of America. She begins to talk to Ashoke about the day's happenings, about her walks along Massachusetts Avenue, her visits to shops and about the pistachio ice cream cones in Harvard Square. They engage in various mini-c creative acts to celebrate Christmas and Thanksgivings more enthusiastically than Durga Puja and "at Thanksgiving, they learn to roast turkeys rubbed with cumin, garlic and cayenne; in December they hang a wreath on their door; at Easter, they color boiled eggs violet and pink and hide them around the house" (p. 64).

Beside this, writes Lahiri, there are other signs of the couple's castration. "Ashoke, accustomed to wearing tailor-made pants and shirts all his life, learns to buy ready-made" (p. 65). Lahiri describes how Ashima changes from a simple Bengali wife to a multi-skilled personality. She starts working as a librarian, becomes a good reader and finds solace in books.

After the death of her husband, she learns to live independently. She restarts her music practice which, being an art form, is a creative forum where she attempts to quench her desire for home. Now, she avoids falling victim to nostalgia and instead, learns to channel her creative energy, provided by the inherent lack of home, in the form of music. Furthermore, she creates a social circle large enough to substitute her Bengali family and creatively thinking, constructs a home in America in the form of Bengali gatherings. She revisits her parent's letters and cries once every year, her innovation in the midst of the misery of unbelonging.

In the early days of her migration, food serves to exert her presence as someone distinct who doesn't belong here; however, as the novel progresses, food-making turns into a creative homemaking practice, a coping mechanism for homesickness. Laura Anh Williams (2007) argues that "culinary practice may be a comfort as well as a bittersweet act, a surrender to pressures to assimilate and an articulation of difference. These articulations are acts of subjectivity-making and self-assertion. (p. 78). As the novel opens, Ashima is in the kitchen preparing a "concoction", "a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India" (p. 1). The word 'concoction' and 'humble approximation' suggest a step towards homemaking as the food item incorporates elements of the home and host culture to formulate a hybrid product. At the same time, this move is creative since a motley assemblage of various old and new ingredients participate in the making of the food product (McCabe & de Waal Malefyt, 2015). Thus, the act of preparing a Bengali-like concoction does not remain a mere habit of routine; rather it becomes a creative act, springing from lack of home, that unifies the home and the hostland in order to create a new home.

Castration is also evident in the pursuit of a right name. Constrained by their loyalty to the Bengali tradition of naming, Ashima and Ashok find a middle ground by selecting a pet name 'Gogol' for their child after the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. Heymann (2012) argues

that naming a child after some famous figure is an appropriation of that name, and therefore a creative act since it alters its meaning to new and private connotations. Later, when Gogol enters his school, a good name Nikhil is selected for formal usage but the couple is attentive to the fact that the new name must be "artfully connected to the old...[bear] a satisfying resemblance to Nikolai, the first name of the Russian Gogol.... [is] relatively easy to pronounce" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 57). Indeed, the selection involves creativity via searching through a repertoire of names and choosing the one that coordinates well with cultural and lingual conventions of both the contexts.

For a lacking and desiring diasporic subject, like Ashima, the wisest course of action to manage the loss is to admit the ontological inadequacy triggered by lack; contrarily, the pursuit for coherence will be a refutation of the primary constitutive act of (diasporic) existence (Ruti, 2010). Ashima recognizes her inherent insufficiency, for instance, by associating positive connotations to Ashoke's death; she believes that by staying away from home, months before his death, Ashoke was in fact "teaching [her] how to live alone" (p. 183). At another occasion, the narrator informs of her adjustment in the wake of various losses. Lahiri writes:

> Having been deprived of the company of her own parents upon moving to America, her children's independence, their need to keep their distance from her, is something she will never understand. Still, she had not argued with them. This, too, she is beginning to learn. (p. 166)

Clearly, these are strategic moves to discover positive means of dealing with her fundamental incoherence, considering her insecurity as an existential predicament rather than an outcome of external forces. With this caveat of unachievable stability, she manages her loss by directing her suffering into different productive homemaking enterprises. In this way, she conciliates with her unconscious to locate the prospects of a healthy life, rather than suffer anxieties and

traumas. Such a course of action, in Freudian psychoanalysis, is to move " from a passive repetition of the past to an active working through of this past" (Ruti. 2010, p. 8).

Nonetheless, it is an arduous task for the diasporic subject to recognize its lack because it is experienced as an agonizing wound requiring cure. As a result, the diasporic subject searches for fantasy constructs that cloak the torments of lack and mitigate its anxieties by offering a sham coherence. In the unfamiliar space of the hospital at the time of her first delivery, Ashima travels back to the intimate and accustomed space of India when she "calculates the Indian time on her hands" (p. 4) and pictures scenes in her home back in Calcutta. It is obvious that in order to mitigate her suffering, the ego is at work to create false surrogates of home via memory and time. At another moment when Ashima receives the news of Ashoke's death, she is not ready to accept it. She responds on the phone, "No. no, it must be a mistake" (p. 169) and "he is just there for an examination" (p. 168). The statements are constructs by the ego that attempts to mask the reality and the pain of Ashoke's death.

4.3. Subjectivation in the Second Generation

In chapter 2 and 3 of this study, I have discussed the trans-generational transfer of traumas and phantoms at length with regard to a number of theorists (Abraham & Torok, 1994; Dhingra & Cheung, 2011; Kogan, 2012; Munos, 2013) and have outlined my point of departure from these studies. Drawing on the inter-subjective nature of Lacanian subjectivation, I have argued that what trans-generationally gets transferred during the primary and subsequent 'mirror exchanges' among various generations are nothing else but the lacks—in my case, the *lack* of home.

In *The Namesake*, the second-generation migrant Gogol is unable to cope with the Symbolic Order of America because his interactions with various 'others' are in conflict with each other. His parents are his primary others who belong to a different Symbolic Order and

pass on their lacks to him, i.e via naming and rituals, whereas the secondary others of the American Symbolic Order put a different set of demands, i.e in school, in love relationships. The conflicting nature of these Symbolic Orders affect his development as a subject, making him torn between the two cultures of India and America, the old and the new. Gogol as a name infiltrates the namesake's whole life, mostly with incongruity and indignity leading to a consistent identity crisis, one after the other. His identity is mainly forged by the interaction of personal and environmental factors, leading him to discard the Indian culture but at the same time making it impossible to adjust in the American culture. Therefore, despite his upbringing in America, he remains confused about his identity for the large part of the narrative, mainly due to his name Gogol and its effects on his relationships including his family, friends and partners.

4.3.1. Frustration: No Place to Call Home

Although Gogol does not experience displacement first-hand, he introjects his parents' experiences of dispersal and their lacks of home via Lacanian mirror exchanges. The most important exchange or transfer of lack takes place via his name, granted by his father after the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. According to the Bengali tradition, Ashima's grandmother sends a letter containing Gogol's *bhalonam* or good name but it never arrives and is lost in the transit. Therefore, the father Ashoke grants him the name 'Gogol', a signifier that is engraved in the former's psychic repository as a traumatic loss. The copy of Nikolai Gogol's short stories helped people identify Ashoke's body buried in the wreckage and hence his life was saved; however, the accident leaves an irradicable traumatic scar on his psyche. Munos (2013) asserts:

> Ashoke's train accident and his granting a name to his son that promises always to bring him back to such a foundational moment are apt metaphors for the ways in which, for second-generation desis like Gogol, the notion of origin is inscribed not in their own

stories, but in that of their parents – more precisely, in their parents' act of departure. (p. 112)

In other words, Ashoke's life is forever wrapped around this event and drives his decision to migrate to America. This lack then is passed on to his son Gogol via naming. From a Lacanian perspective, Gogol's subjectivity is constructed by the inscription of his father's psychic scars during their mirror exchanges.

The loss of good name or *bhalonam* in transit alludes to its absence and presence at the same time; no one knows what it is, but everyone knows that it exists somewhere and may possibly arrive at any moment in the future. Seen from a Lacanian perspective, the name becomes an *objet petit a*, a forever lost signifier of the "real', a 'real' hole which is existent and nonexistent at the same time. Its existence can be sensed via its impetus but it cannot be found. Its influence is all-pervasive in the novel and the entire narrative hinges on it. In fact, Gogol's struggle with his name is a struggle for finding a home, lost to his parents and transferred to him as a lack; like a psychotic subject, he is a lost signifier who is unable to anchor himself to an origin, a home. As Heinze (2007) argues that "the name in transit is a signifier that, leaving the home country but never reaching its destination, remains unknown and unknowable; its absence comes to signify without the signifier being named" (p. 194). On a larger scale, the name as a signifier typifies the destiny of each migrant who departs from his home and is unable to reach it again.

Another mirror encounter for the transfer of lack is his *annaprasan* or the rice ceremony around the age of six months, coinciding with Lacan's Mirror Image Stage which also happens around the same age and in which a subject's subjectivity is constructed. Gogol acquires a new identity and food acts as a Lacanian mirror to start this new relationship. He will explore, discover and create his own ways of interacting with the world as Lahiri mentions that "it is all meant to introduce him to a lifetime of consumption, a meal to inaugurate the tens of thousands

of unremembered meals to come." (p. 40). The way a Lacanian subject learns to negotiate his terms of living with the world via the Mirror Image Stage, Gogol is made to determine his path via the food ceremony. He is offered three choices (soil, pen and currency) assorted in a plate which will determine what he wants to be: a landowner, a scholar or a businessman, by selecting any one of the three items respectively. However, Gogol is disinterested in the Bengali way of determining one's destiny and therefore, discards the items on the plate, signaling his future dislike for the Indian/Bengali traditions and culture. There are various suggestions from the audience to select this or that item and the most important one comes as a prohibiting "No" from his father "The pen. Gogol, take the pen" (p. 40). The scene foreshadows Gogol's future confusions and his struggles with the Indian and American culture. The 'No' here alludes to Lacan's No-of-the-father, the primary agent of prohibition or the cultural law which enforces on the child to understand and act in accordance with the ways of the Symbolic world or the Big Other.

4.3.2. Privation: Rivalries with Non-Homes

Gogol's privation is complex since he neither feels connected with his Indian origins nor is he satisfied with the ways of the American culture. Whatever position he takes is driven by the situational or societal pressures which is later abandoned as soon as the situation changes. His antagonism against the Indian traditions is foreshadowed in turning "his head with an expression of extreme consternation and yawns" (p. 28) when his father first names him as Gogol. His later life reveals multiple signs of rejection of homeland. For instance, during his eight-month long trip to Calcutta, India appears as a foreign land unconnected with him. When he is given a good name 'Nikhil' in unison with the Bengali tradition, he disapproves because "he is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know" (p. 57). In other words, he is afraid of the alienation that the Bengali tradition brings in. Despite the justification from his

parents that "it's a part of growing up,.... part of being a Bengali (p. 57)", he is unhappy. As he grows older, the bizarreness inherent in his pet name Gogol surfaces much frequently during interactions with his friends and relations, sexual and familial both. People mock it, laugh at it and even despise it. Thus, succumbing to societal demands, he relieves himself of the burden of his father's past and officially changes his name to Nikhil. He tells the judge that he does not like his pet name Gogol as he has always hated it. He tears up his old driving license and his books containing his name (pp. 103-104), registers for a drawing course against the will of his parents, gives up the Bengali tradition of preserving his virginity and starts drinking liquor. His enrolment for a drawing course in fact is a rebellious act against the authority of the Name-of-The-Father and asserting one's own authority. After changing the name, it appears easier to him to disregard his parents' concerns. Drawing as a creative art form allows creating an imagined world of jubilance and joys, an imagined blissful home, where he will no longer be a stranger, contrary to his previous identity as Gogol.

However, this attitude does not last longer as he senses the strangeness of his new identity, in his parents calling of his new name and realizes that he cannot undo his 18 years as Gogol. He feels like he is acting and "still feels his old name, painfully and without warning." (p. 105). It is one thing to change one's name and thereby one's identity, but the latter is not a private and personal property. As social beings, humans are connected to a vast network of relations and so is Gogol; he can't change the way how others think about him. Gogol becomes cognizant of this fact that whatever he does with his name, he will remain the same for people around him and they "will never call him anything but Gogol" (p. 103). It dawns upon him that 'there's no such thing as a perfect name. I think that human beings should be allowed to name themselves when they turn eighteen,' he adds. 'Until then, pronouns.' (Lahiri, 2003, p. 245).

4.3.3. Castration: The Founding of a Provisional Home

Gogol's castration can be observed across the text where signs of his abandoning the rivalry and gradual advancement towards homemaking or subjectivation are present. The process of his name change is a manifestation of his psychic castration which can be illustrated by using Slavoj Zizek's reading of Lacan. Zizek (2008) maintains that in Lacanian theory, the first name designates ideal ego i(o), and the family name designates ego-ideal I(O); the former pertains to imaginary identification whereas the latter to the symbolic identification. He asserts that how one is perceived by oneself and by others is a distinction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. He says:

> In imaginary identification we imitate the other at the level of resemblance - we identify ourselves with the image of the other in as much as we are 'like him', while in symbolic identification we identify ourselves with the other precisely at a point at which he is inimitable, at the point which eludes resemblance. (p. 121)

A nickname that is given by family becomes an oddity for the migrants because of its difficulty of pronunciation or its assonance with objects that are held in disdain in the host culture. In the context of the novel, changing one's name implies an attempt to resemble one's ego-ideal I(O). In other words, one tries to resemble the host culture as much as possible by eradicating the residues of the symbolic order of one's home culture —in this case, south Asian culture — i.e the accent, the smell, the behavior etc. This is clearly evident in Gogol's changing his name from Gogol to Nikhil which is anglicized as Nick and allows greater chances of integration into the American society. Becoming Nikhil is a big stride forward towards becoming an American which makes him acceptable to many including his girlfriend Maxine since the name resonates with cultural tones of American society. In this way, he tries to dispose of the old identity to obtain a new cultural and social identity (Reed, 2010) for a better living experience in the society. In this sense, Gogol's name change is a creative response to the insecurities of existence, or to his lack, prompted by an alien culture.

After the sudden death of Ashoke, Gogol resolves the enigma of his father's choice of the name Gogol and signals a move towards creative acculturation or homemaking in America. After years of suffering and anxiety of not being part of either American or Indian world, he acknowledges the significance of his name which then becomes an extended metaphor in examining the dynamics of loss of home and his Indian lineage. Indeed, the feeling of rootlessness and estrangement which he felt until now has been intolerable; however, it is this lack of home that helps in his creative homemaking. He finally directs his talents to the reading of 'the overcoat' and reverts to his father and his favorite author Nikolai Gogol.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role of home as a Lacanian lack which is provisional, multiple and in flux, never within the grasp of *The Namesake* characters. It is installed in the first and second-generation characters via their subjectivation and activates their desire to perpetually seek it in order to regain their lost jouissance. Aided by the function of fantasy, Ashima and Gogol pursuit of lost jouissance engages them in creative homemaking practices by locating surrogates of home in food, naming and traditions etc. However, the lack of home persists as a shadow keeping the characters always in conversation with the contextual factors in their pursuit of a perpetually deferred home.

CHAPTER 5

LACK OF HOME AND SUBJECTIVATION IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

In my continued investigation of my second (*How do the selected novels manifest the Lacanian lack in their character's desire for home?)* and third research question (*How does the diasporic lack of home act as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, resulting in a perpetual desire for homemaking or acculturation?),* in this chapter, I have attempted to capture the contours of lack of home from a Nigerian perspective (a sub-category of African diaspora) in response to my second research question. I have demonstrated how home/Nigeria are constitutive of the characters' subjectivities which are shattered in the wake of displacement and are continually reconstructed in agreement with Lacan's subjectivation process. The process castrates the characters as lacking and desiring diasporic subjects which psychically interact with each other in a ceaseless manner producing creative forms of homemaking. The focus of this chapter is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel Americanah, first published in 2013, inspired by Adichie's own experience of displacement and autobiographically reflects on "what it means to be black in America" (Adichie & Bianculli, 2013). The novel deals with issues of diasporic experiences of dispersal from and return to homeland, encounters with institutionalized forms of racism in the hostland, and the consequent successes and failures of homemaking. My analysis largely centers on the protagonist Ifemelu, and her lover Obinze, who are exposed to institutionalized forms of racism that marginalize and silence them via structural injustices.

The novel has been the subject of various scholarly debates covering various dimensions of black diaspora (Goyal, 2017; Landry, 2018; McCoy, 2017; McMann, 2018; Phiri, 2017; Suárez-Rodríguez, 2022). For instance, in her exploration of Americanah, Phiri (2017) challenges the traditional conceptualization of black diasporic subjectivity as

inadequate and in need of expansion. She posits that the novel *Americanah* accentuates the fluidity, mutability, and indeterminacy of black subjectivity, which necessitates resituating and reviving its enduring and complex significance in political consciousness and imagination. Similarly, Landry (2018) has explored how *Americanah* expands the meanings of Blackness through an unexplored acculturative process, emphasizing the sociological aspects of the novel. She argues that upon migration, African immigrants bring with them 'pre-migration ethnic identities' but encounter a racial context in the hostland which labels them as 'others' or 'blacks', thus allowing for the development of 'post-migration racial identities' and the establishment of new ways to live and define blackness. This, she claims, provides the space for African immigrants to 'forge new ways to 'do' Blackness' (p. 145). McMann (2018) has investigated Americanah, along with Andre Levi's Small Island, with reference to racism and blackness. She argues that blackness is a historical and cultural construct 'an invention not of nature but of our social institutions and practices' (p. 202) whose context is founded on a 'history of colonialism, exploitation, and oppression' (p. 201). Blackness, she argues, is 'a signifier of difference and of otherness' (p. 202) which is fashioned on racial differences situated in Ifemelu's body and is imposed upon her when she arrives in America. This signifier, in fact, attests and perpetuates the hierarchies and binaries that designate the white a superior status over the black (p. 211). Indeed, these studies have broadened our understanding of the novel's implications and have provided new areas for debate and discussion, yet there remains significant uncharted territory that warrants exploration, which the present study seeks to address.

5.1. The Story

The story revolves around the aspirations, goals, failures and disappointment of Ifemelu and Obinze in their native country, Nigeria and in the U.S. and the UK as immigrants.

Frustrated by the corrupt politics and lack of opportunities for academic success in Nigeria, Ifemelu migrates to various places, first from her native city Lagos to Nsukka, then to "overseas" America and finally returns to a "transformed" Nigeria. Each dispersal disturbs her subjectivity, invoking a deep sense of disorientation with the frustratingly discordant new abodes, which subsides later giving way to a provisional form of homemaking. Each time, her lack activates the restoration of her subjectivity via a ceaselessly cyclical process, generating a continuous but imperfect interaction between feelings of disorientation and orientation which leads to homemaking; however, in this struggle of unease and ease, home(land) lurks behind as a persistent shadow.

Ifemelu's first displacement is from Lagos to Nsukka where she enrolls for study at the university. The decision is made after she sacrifices her better study options to be with Obinze — her "love at first sight" (p. 62) who serves as her 'mirror' and a source of comfort amid the agonizing realities of life — whose choices of admission are constrained by his mother's illness. Obinze helps her settle in Nsukka after the initial days of inconvenience. However, the political instability of Nigeria and the ensuing closure of universities induce her migration to America, a destination popular among the Nigerians owing to its lure of better life. She wins a scholarship to a university in Philadelphia, but is hesitant to leave home and Obinze. Eventually convinced by the latter, she arrives in America and stays with aunty Uju and her son Dike in Brooklyn for the autumn. Later, she moves to Philadelphia to start her school where her Nigerian friend Ginika acquaints her with the American culture, steeped in racism against the black people. She has great difficulties finding a job and financially sustaining herself; she is forced to Americanize herself by erasing the remnants of Nigeria from her personality, i.e adopting the American accent, and coming to terms with the American cultural norms. Despite this, she is unable to find a decent job and is forced to accept "relaxing" a tennis coach for $100— which involves lying with him and allowing him to touch her private parts. After that

loathsome experience, she starts hating her body, succumbs to depression, and cuts off her ties with Obinze. Later, Ginika helps her find a babysitting job with a nice wealthy lady, Kimberly. Ifemelu starts dating Kimberly's cousin Curt, a rich white man who helps her secure a good job and a green card, but she cheats on Curt due to her anxieties of inter-racial relationship. Consequently, she starts a resistance against the racist attitudes by using her blog "Raceteenth" which highlights racial issues faced by black people in America. The blog brings her fame and she is invited to deliver talks on issues of race. She also starts dating Blaine, an African-American professor at the Yale university. Both of them become strong supporters of Barack Obama' presidential campaign. Later Ifemelu secures a fellowship at Princeton. Eventually, she grows dissatisfied with her life in America, her blog and her boyfriend Blaine and decides to return to Nigeria. However, after her return, she finds Nigeria surprisingly unhomely as it has changed significantly in her absence. Although it is void of the racism unlike America, still she feels the same disillusionment and is unable to adjust. Consequently, she undergoes homemaking or acculturation once again in order to connect to a spatially and temporally different Nigeria. These experiences of dislocation transform Ifemelu into an Americanah, a mixture of the African and American identities. Adichie, in an interview, (Adichie & Bianculli, 2013) explains the term Americanah rooted in Nigerian etymology.

> "Americanah ... is a kind of playful word that's used for people who have been to the U.S. and who come back to Nigeria with American affectations, ... [who] pretend that they no longer understand Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa..... [who] suddenly won't eat Nigerian food..... And also often it's used for people who are genuinely Americanized. But it's a very playful way..... used in the context of a kind of gentle mockery.

For Obinze, the story takes a different turn. Ifemelu's non-responsiveness from America upsets him. He migrates to England after his graduation and finds himself in great

troubles. Despite all his endeavors to make a fortune in the UK, he is "consumed by immigration worries" (p. 263) and finally "removed" as if he is something "inanimate.... A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing" (p. 279). He is unable to find a job and his visa expires. His fake marriage with a lady Cleotilde — a European Union visa holder who is his key to UK citizenship— does not materialize and he is deported to Nigeria after being arrested as an illegal immigrant. Based on his experience of dislocation, he learns that class is the primary thing in The UK, unlike America where race is the dominant social category. Through him, Adichie presents a different perspective of migrants who are forced to leave their country, not because of war, poverty or torture, but because of "the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness". Such migrants, like Obinze, "were raised well fed and watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else..... none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, but merely hungry for choice and certainty" (p. 276). Through this, Adichie is attempting to question the conventional representations of Africa, mired in trauma, and oppression, thus highlighting a new kind of Africa. Upon his return to Nigeria, Obinze enters real estate business and gets rich. He marries Kosi and has a daughter. The end of the novel is suggestive of his union with Ifemelu.

5.2. Subjectivation in Americanah

In the course of the novel, Ifemelu moves to multiple locations and after the initial disorientation, is able to settle there through her creative psychic homemaking mechanisms. The new homes become part of her subjectivity which is shattered with every new dispersal. In this way, home coupled with a network of geographical, cultural and social associations, functions as a Lacanian *mirror* or *other*, and is constitutive of Ifemelu's subjectivity. Her continual loss of home in the wake of dislocations induces subjective turmoils and shatters her subjectivity, necessitating its re-constitution. Each new displacement is founded on the original

primary separation and causes new rivalries with the new surrounds. Analogous to a Lacanian subject, her subjectivity is continually restructured — since it is never complete — via the re-subjectivation process, repetitively installing the lack of home as outlined in chapter 3. The lack instigates her desire and she attempts to locate various surrogates of home via creative homemaking strategies in order to steer her life forward.

5.2.1. Pre-Oedipal Jouissance of Union with Nigeria

Ifemelu has her moments of euphoria and plenitude, of union with the *other* identical a Lacanian subject. Among these, the primary source of her happiness and her primary Lacanian mirror is Obinze who incites in her a "self-affection" for the first time in their first (mirror) encounter at a party (p. 61). The narcissism latent here echoes of the child's bewitching encounter with the mirror, in the Lacanian sense, when the image captures the child in its lure and drives it to fall in love with it. Further, Obinze elicits a sense of "trust, so sudden and yet so complete" in Ifemelu and makes "her like herself. With him, she was at ease; her skin felt as though it was her right size" (p. 61). This sense of completeness and perfection is identical to Lacan's pre-Oedipal moment of jouissance or perfect unity with the mother. The unceasing paradisal state of happiness is manifest when she narrates:

> Sometimes she worried that she was too happy. She would sink into moodiness, and snap at Obinze, or be distant. And her joy would become a restless thing, flapping its wings inside her, as though looking for an opening to fly away. (p. 63)

Resonating with Lacanian subject's desire to be with the mother forever, Ifemelu, when invited by Obinze's mother, thinks "how much she wanted to remain there with them, in their rapture, forever" (p. 71). She aspires "to breathe the same air as Obinze" (p. 57). Similarly, Ifemelu's nescience of her blackness refers to the pre-oedipal phase of complete union of a subject with the mother when it does not lack anything; it is the rupture of split that makes the subject realize

its own limitations, creating an unfulfillable void in it. In this sense, Ifemelu is merely "living" before migration, inattentive to her color, her home, and attains a sense of geography and all its accessories only after migration; thus, she is "living in America" now.

5.2.2. Frustration: The Absence of Nigeria

Frustration in Lacan involves the absence of mother and her love which brings extreme anxiety as detailed in chapter 3. Ifemelu's paradisal union with home, in its geographical as well as metaphorical sense, comes to an end when she migrates from Lagos to Nsukka for university study. In the Lacanian sense, Nsukka is the introduction of the third term that breaks the (m)other-child dyadic relationship, in this case Ifemelu's relationship with home. First, she is perturbed in the initial phase of migration as, "Nsukka disoriented her. She thought it too slow, the dust too red, the people too satisfied with the smallness of their lives" (p. 89); however, the presence of Obinze is a comfort that reduces the intensity of her split. In the wake of endless strikes at Nsukka university, many students decide to move abroad to complete their education. Pertinent to this, Aunty Uju suggests that Ifemelu should migrate to America to complete her degree but she denies because she does not want to leave Obinze. However, her mind is changed when Obinze insists but she agrees only because it comes from Obinze despite the fact that she "did not quite grasp what it all meant" (p. 90). Here, the structuring role of Obinze as a *mirror other* for Ifemelu is evident who presents Ifemelu's own desire in an *inverted* form, that is, in the form of Obinze's desire, in line with Lacan's argument that man's desire is the desire of the *other*. Nonetheless, she still is caught in the dilemma of whether to leave or stay in Nigeria. She then starts dreaming about America; however, when it seems viable to migrate, "she stop[s] dreaming,.. too afraid to hope" (p. 100). Eventually, the couple make a reunion plan that Obinze "would come to America the minute he graduated" (p. 101), synonymously exhibiting a Lacanian subject's desire to reunite with its mother.

After her dislocation to America, Ifemelu feels the absence of familiar environment and is caught in the uncertainty of un-belonging in America, like an alien in a new culture. Alongside the unfamiliar landscape and the feelings of being a foreigner, the intense memories of home pose a challenge to Ifemelu. Adichie notes that "there was a stripped-down quality to her life, a kindling starkness, without parents and friends and home, the familiar landmarks that made her who she was" (p. 111). In Philadelphia, "the crisp air, fragrant and dry, reminded her of Nsukka during the harmattan season, and brought with it a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears" (p. 145).

At the same time, her image of the "overseas" America is shattered because the America of her imagination was significantly different— where "the mundane things ...were covered in a high-shine gloss" (p. 104)—from the America she finds in reality, "the sweltering heat alarmed her" (pp. 103-104); the buildings, cars and signboards are "disappointingly matte" (p. 104). She is upset by the "shapeless dresses" (p. 126), by the "unbearably alien, absence of sponge" in the shower (p. 12), and by the baffling codes of hospitality where "nobody paid for nobody else" (p. 130). Her first night in America is uneasy as she "stood there for a long time, her body unsure of itself, overwhelmed by a sense of newness" (p. 106). Aunty Uju's behavior is different, reflecting the overwhelming influence of America as if "America has subdued her" (p. 110). Her "casual hug" and a perceptible regret of Ifemelu's presence (p. 104) makes Ifemelu realize the hard life she has been living for so many years. Her persistent assertion on "this is America. It's different" (p. 109) through her various actions add to the shoddy feelings of Ifemelu about America.

5.2.3. Privation: Rivalry with America and Love for Nigeria

Privation in Lacan involves a relationship of rivalry with the father who is the agent of prohibition (detailed in chapter 3). In the context of Americanah, this translates into Ifemelu's

rivalry and discomfort with the American culture. Besides the natural feelings of chaos and confusion in the strange land, the institutionalized racist attitudes of American society contribute enormously to Ifemelu's discomfort. This form of racism mainly originates from Ifemelu's African origins and her black skin color which is oftentimes used as a signifier of otherness, of African and other black diasporic communities engendering various forms of racial injustices and discrimination (Gomez, 2019; McMann, 2018; Ouma, 2020; Rahiminezhad & Arabian, 2018).

A number of theorists have found Lacanian theory's relevance to race, despite Lacan's apparent disregard for it (S. George, 2016; S. George & Hook, 2021; Khan, 2018; McGowan, 2021; Žižek, 1992, 2016). Their findings connect racism with the Lacanian notion of *Jouissance*, the extreme or surplus libidinal enjoyment which is the projection of one's *lack* (that I cannot enjoy) in the other. In simple words, during the process of subjectivation, a subject loses its sense of wholeness, a state of voluptuous pleasure and becomes a subject of lack from thence after, searching for the lost wholeness. In the context of race, as Sheldon George (2016) argues, "the other's jouissance or enjoyment is the very core around which otherness articulates itself to constitute racial difference" (p. 3). In other words, the racist subject sees the other, in this case 'blacks', enjoying that libidinal enjoyment and this becomes the cause of discomfort for him. In this way, racism is seen as "a theft of enjoyment" (Hook, 2021; Žižek, 1992, 2006). The idea is elaborated in Zizek (1992) which states:

> What is at stake in ethnic tensions is always [a kind of] possession: the "other" wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our "way of life") and/or he has access to some secret, perverse enjoyment. In short, what gets on our nerves, what really bothers us about the "other" is the peculiar way he organizes his enjoyment (the smell of his food, his "noisy" songs and dances, his strange manners, his attitudes to work – in the racist

perspective, the "other" is either a workaholic stealing our jobs or an idler living on our labour)" (p. 165).

What it means is that humans have a tendency to think that they are enjoying less than they deserve, and when they see other people enjoying, they think that their enjoyment has been stolen by the other and that the other is enjoying their enjoyment. In other words, they disavow their own enjoyment and consider the 'other' enjoying more, even undeservedly at their expense. This is an upsetting and painful perception. This role of Jouissance has been revisited in Žižek's (2016) recent work in which he writes:

> What, then, is the factor that renders different cultures (or, rather, ways of life in the rich complexity of their daily practices) incompatible, what is the obstacle that prevents their fusion or, at least, their harmoniously indifferent co-existence? The psychoanalytic answer is jouissance ... [D]ifferent modes of jouissance are incongruous with each other, without a common measure ... [In inter-cultural contact,] the subject projects ... its jouissance onto an [other], attributing to this [other] full access to a consistent jouissance. Such a constellation cannot but give rise to jealousy: in jealousy, the subject creates or imagines a paradise (a utopia of full jouissance) from which he is excluded. (p. 75)

In the context of the novel, this racist tendency is at work by which people of African origins are considered as thieves of White's jouissance and thus are made the target of mistreatment. The latter's skin color is constitutive of their African identity encapsulating all notions of othering associated with it. By extension, blackness also functions as a signifier of home that ties Africans with their ancestral African lineage: therefore, the racist mistreatment due to black color instigates the lack of home agape and the longing for home is triggered. In the novel, Ifemelu's blackness becomes the chief obstacle in her acceptance in the American culture corroborating the fact that her identity is more based on her color, than anything else.

She is treated as an outsider, deeply stimulating her feelings of lack of home. Her blackness becomes a significant determinant of the kind of behavior she deserves, the jobs she can do and the partners she can select. For instance, when she moves to Philadelphia to start her school, she is unable to find a job despite countless interviews and despite numerous changes to her lifestyle. This triggers her sense of loss of home. Adichie writes:

> "She was at war with the world, and woke up each day feeling bruised, imagining a horde of faceless people who were all against her. It terrified her, to be unable to visualize tomorrow...To be here, living abroad, not knowing when she could go home again, was to watch love become anxiety." (p. 152)

Unsuccessful, she is forced to accept a "massage" offer by a tennis coach after which she loses her sense of self and her interest in the world. Adichie notes that "she began to cry. She felt like a small ball, adrift and alone. The world was a big, big place and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around emptily" (p. 154).

Prior to migration, Ifemelu is oblivious of her blackness in her homeland and only realizes it when she encounters the racializing behaviors of the American community. She considers the acceptance of this fact an essential first step in battling and resisting racism that has become institutionalized. It is irritating for her to see other blacks turning a blind eye to this fact; therefore, in her blog titled, "To my Fellow Non-American Blacks in America. You Are Black, Baby", she writes:

> Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't black in your own country? You're in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes. Mine was in a class in undergrad when I was asked to give the black perspective, only I had no idea what that was. So I just made something up. And admit it—you say "I'm not

> black" only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder. And you want none of that. What if being black had all the privileges of being white? Would you say "Don't call me black, I'm from Trinidad?" I didn't think so. So you're black, baby. (p. 220)

What is more significant to note is that the experience of racism is not uniform across all black individuals and there exist varying shades of it. Ifemelu believes that exceptional individual cases cannot be indicators of inexistence of racism. On this point, Ifemelu argues with a Haitian poet in the dinner party whose experience of dating a white man compels her to acknowledge that racism can be thwarted. Ifemelu says:

> The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. (p. 291)

Contrary to the Haitian poet, Ifemelu faces racism despite having a white boyfriend, Curt — a beautiful man who is supposed to have a 'white' girlfriend instead of the 'black' Ifemelu. It is experienced in the "why her" (p. 292) looks of the people when she accompanies Curt in the latter's home, in parties and in spas. She responds to these gestures with victorious smiles but at times "she was tired even of Curt's protection, tired of needing protection". (p. 293). By comparison, Ifemelu feels that racial hatred experienced by black people in America is far worse than the experience of other migrants. In one of her blogs, she writes:

> American racial minorities—blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jews—all get shit from white folks, different kinds of shit, but shit still. . . . However, all the others think they're better than blacks because, well, they're not black. . . . [M]any minorities have a

conflicted longing for WASP whiteness. . . . They probably don't like pale skin but they certainly like walking into a store without some security dude following them. (p. 205)

Aunty Uju is another character closely connected with Ifemelu who is the victim of racism. The cultural invasion is so deep and piercing that she feels it normal to change her name, and thus her identity. She pronounces her name the way Americans pronounce it— "you-joo instead of oo-joo" (p. 104). She wants her son Dike not to speak her native Igbo language and wear a shirt that is appropriate for the church because, "if he does not dress properly, they will find something to say about us. If they are shabby, it's not a problem, but if we are, it is another thing." (Adichie, 2017, p. 215). She gets shouts from teacher assistants in Dike's school (p. 217) and is told that her accent was incomprehensible (p. 218). This clearly points towards the double standards of American society which has long categorized blacks as belonging to a " thug culture" which define them as criminals needing "violent disciplinary instruction in proper conduct" (S. George, 2016, p. 2).

Another important aspect through which Ifemelu is made the target of racism is her hair — a signifier of blackness, of Africa, and of home. In the novel, when Ifemelu plans to go for a job interview, her career counsellor suggests that she must "lose the braids and straighten [the] hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff, but it matters" (p. 204). McMann (2018) points out that African hair will always be seen from a political perspective. She quotes that Ifemelu's straightening of hair will make her "less radical, less ethnic, and less politically threatening" (p. 208) which is confirmed when Ifemelu is asked about her African hair at the workplace, "Does it mean anything? Like something political?" (Adichie, 2017, p. 211). In her blog "... Hair as Race Metaphor", Ifemelu acknowledges that hair politics is so significant that it may cause Obama lose his votes if his wife allows her hair to grow naturally. Natural African hair is "not professional, sophisticated, whatever, it's just not damn normal" (p. 296). The abnormality of the hair and by extension the Ifemelu is evident when at the spa, she is denied

having her eyebrows waxed because they "don't do curly" (p. 292). The reason that Ifemelu tells Curt is that "maybe they've never done a black woman's eyebrows and so they think it's different, because our hair is different, after all, but I guess now she knows the eyebrows are not that different" (p. 293). The mistaken difference of eyebrows reflects the large-scale indoctrination of racist outlooks in the American society. This indoctrination is visible in Aunty Uju's dislike for African hair because "there is something scruffy and untidy about natural hair" (p. 216). She informs Ifemelu that she had to remove her braids and relax her hair for the job interview because "if you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional" (Adichie, 2017, p. 119).

5.2.4. Castration: Homemaking/Acculturation

Castration in Lacan entails giving up rivalry and coming to terms with one's constitutive lack of the original object. For Ifemelu, this means abandoning her dissension with the American society and engaging in homemaking practices. She thus attempts to adjust in the various new places she moves to in the course of the novel. In this way, her lack of home functions as a resource that unshackles her creativity and triggers a desire for creative homemaking. These new places turn into homes, become part of subjectivity and dispersal from these places triggers a subjective turmoil, necessitating subjectivation or homemaking again.This is evident in her first dispersal to Nsukka where despite her preliminary disorientation, she knows that "she would come to love it, a hesitant love at first" (p. 89). Gradually, in the company of Obinze and her mother, her disorientation fades and she finds "many options for belonging" in Nsukka (p. 89). When she returns to Nsukka from Lagos after the university reopens after a shutdown due to strikes by the academic staff, she is surprised to find out:

> how much she had missed Nsukka itself, the routines of unhurried pace, friends gathered in her room until past midnight, the inconsequential gossip told and retold, the stairs climbed slowly up and down as though in a gradual awakening, and each morning whitened by the harmattan. (p. 92)

Similarly in America, after the initial days of anxiety in Aunty Uju's home in Brooklyn, she attunes herself to the environment and the people, especially Aunty Uju's son Dike. And when it is time to start her school in Philadelphia, and to leave Brooklyn, she feels hesitant. Adichie writes that "she wanted to start school, to find the real America, and yet there was that gnawing in her stomach, an anxiety, and a new, aching nostalgia for the Brooklyn summer that had become familiar" (p. 119). She ambivalently desires for progress and discovery and at the same time, is perturbed by the ache of loss. However, like a Lacanian subjectivized subject, she "begin[s] a life in which she alone determined the margins" (p. 120). There, she slowly begins to make sense of the American world. Adichie writes

> "Ifemelu would come to like the gyros from those carts, flatbread and lamb and dripping sauces, as she would come to love Philadelphia itself. It did not raise the specter of intimidation as Manhattan did; it was intimate but not provincial, a city that might yet be kind to you." (p. 123)

She has an intense desire to know America, a new symbolic world of the Lacanian child. Adichie mentions that "SHE HUNGERED to understand everything about America, to wear a new, knowing skin right away" (p. 135). In this journey, Obinze remains a constant aid who helps her understand America. At the library, when she starts exploring America via books recommended by Obenze, "America's mythologies began to take on meaning, America's tribalisms—race, ideology, and region—became clear. And she was consoled by her new knowledge" (p. 136).

In the wake of continual displacements and disruptions of subjectivities, Ifemelu turns to writing a blog as a homemaking strategy to satisfy her *lack* of home. In the Lacanian sense, this is tantamount to accepting the predominant role of the *Father* and accepting that one cannot have the mother(land). This necessitates a need for finding alternatives and Ifemelu chooses writing, a creative process of signification which allows her to observe the frustrating experiences of racial injustices and transform them into tangible words. She is successful in getting a plausible number of audience, which indicates that her aim of raising awareness and reformation is achieved to a greater extent. In this way, writing becomes her home which subsumes her torments and anxieties, and saves her from falling victim to neurosis or psychosis.

5.3. Redispersal and Return to a Forever Lost Home

Ifemelu's return to Nigeria and her disillusionment at the end of the novel reinforces my original argument that home is the original lost object, the *objet petit a* which once lost can never be regained. Despite the gradual ease of American life, the image of Nigeria with its customs and traditions disturbs her provisional homemaking in America: even other Nigerian returnees engender an "ache of loss" in her as if "they were living her life" (Adichie, 2017, p. 6). She acknowledges that her unbraiding of hair and adopting American accent cannot help her acculturate and counter the American racism; it can only make the blacks more acceptable for the American employers. Resultantly, she abandons her American accent and hairstyle. Afterwards, when she is praised for her American accent, she feels the friction inside:

> Why was it a compliment, an accomplishment, to sound American? . . . . because she had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers. And so she . . . resolved to stop faking the American accent. . . . [and] felt a rush of pleasure

from giving the t its full due in "advantage," from not rolling her r in "Haverhill." This was truly her. (p. 175)

The "truly her" lies in her adapting to the American language in a Nigerian way; without faking the patterns of American lingual and cultural praxis. She realizes that Nigeria is "the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil" (p. 6) Prior to it, she senses that "there was cement in her soul . . . an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness", of which Obinze, her first love, was also a part (p. 6). Her train journey from Princeton to Trenton awakens memories of home where she never thought of herself as black. Thirteen years of stay in America has shrouded her personality and "layer after layer of discontent had settled in her" (p.7).

Nonetheless, despite her return to Nigeria, she has to undergo homemaking again in order to acculturate herself in Nigeria as if the latter is a new place. The absence of racism in Nigeria, which has been a hurdle in her homemaking in America, must have conditioned her with her native homeland despite its spatial and temporal modifications; nonetheless, the case is otherwise which is evidently suggestive of the insistence of her constitutive *lack*. She acknowledges when Curt asks her whether she still writes about race, she responds that "No, just about life. Race doesn't really work here. I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" but even here, "she wished it were different. If only she could feel what she wanted to feel" (p. 476). This feeling of homelessness in her native homeland Nigeria testifies the elusive nature of home which always remains beyond one's reach, like a Lacanian *lack* or an *objet petit a*.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the rupturing of black diasporic subjectivities due to loss of home and their continual reconstruction in line with Lacan's subjectivation process. Through the character of Ifemelu, it has demonstrated how the continuous displacements of blacks within and outside Africa unsettle their subjectivities, installing their constitutive *lack* of home which instigates them to create new homes for their survival, through heterogenous new forms of living. However, home remains a Lacanian *objet a*, always staying out of their reach. Despite physical return to their native homeland, in this case Nigeria, the feeling of being at home are absent, emphasizing the phantasmatic nature of physical abodes.

Ifemelu's signifiers of home— her black color and hair— situate her in the historically and culturally constructed discourses of blackness and identity in America, an American Symbolic Order where the racist attitudes or the surrogates of Lacan's Name-Of-The-Father exert their influence and resist her efforts to access or create a home. Her encounter with racism in America is representative of the ways in which African blacks operate in the midst of primacy of the White where they are considered thieves of White jouissance and thus are marginalised. However, these impediments trigger their creativity and restores their subjectivities via a ceaselessly cyclical process, generating continuous but imperfect interactions between feelings of disorientation and orientation leading to provisional forms of homemaking; nonetheless, in this struggle of unease and ease, home(land) lurks behind as a persistent shadow. Read in the light of Lacanian theory of *lack*, *Americanah* stamps its mark on the emergent diasporic discourses as a transnationalist narrative which significantly modifies traditional understandings of the African diasporic condition.

CHAPTER 6

LACK OF HOME AND SUBJECTIVATION IN SUSAN ABULHAWA'S MORNINGS IN JENIN

In this chapter, I continue my exploration of my research question two (*How do the selected novels manifest the Lacanian lack in their character's desire for home?)* and three (How *does the diasporic lack of home act as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, resulting in a perpetual desire for homemaking or (acculturation?).* I have explored the diasporic loss of home, the fracturing of diasporic subjectivities and the formation of lacking diasporic subjects after the re-subjectivation process, which becomes a stimulant of creative homemaking or acculturation in the hostland. My focus in this chapter is on *Mornings in Jenin,* a novel by a Palestinian-American writer Susan Abulhawa (Abulhawa, 2010). My previous explorations of diasporic loss of home and creative acculturation in diasporic fiction are based on voluntary migration (*The Namesake* in chapter 4) and partially involuntary migration (*Americanah* in chapter 5); however, the case with *Mornings in Jenin* is different as it centers on forced migration in the context of Palestine.

6.1. The Story

The novel, divided into eight main parts, further subdivided into 47 chapters and a prelude, is constructed around the events of Arab- Israel war in 1948 and the consequent establishment of the state of Israel. The event is recorded in Palestinian history as *Al-Nakbah* or the catastrophe, alluding to the massive scale of destruction wrought upon the Palestinians and their subsequent generations. The novel spotlights the forced departure of Abulheja family from their village of Ein Hod in Palestine and spans over four generations — Yehya and Basima, their sons Hasan and Darweesh, grandsons Ismael (who was stolen by a Jew soldier Moshe and was raised as David) and Yousef, granddaughter Amal and great granddaughter

Sara. The story is inspired by Susan Abulhawa's personal experiences of dislocation in 1967 Arab-Israel war, also known as the Six-Day war, or *Al-Naksah* or the setback, when her family was uprooted and made refugees. The novel typifies her conviction about the necessity of presenting both sides of the Palestine- Israel conflict in order to confront manipulation of facts. It is thus a need-turned-desire that instigated her interest in writing this novel, to leave her medical profession and become a writer because, as she says, "someone stole my story and retold the truth of me as a lie ... making me disappear, rootless and irrelevant". (Abulhawa, 2017, p. 59). The novel, first published as *The Scar of David* in 2006 and later named as *Mornings in Jenin* in 2010, is regarded as a significant contribution to the hitherto absent Palestinian voice in the literary circles. In the words of Payel Pal (2021), *Mornings in Jenin* "chronicle[s] the harrowing experiences of the Palestinian Arabs who had been victims of forcible eviction in the 1940s and also depict[s] the hyphenated lives of Palestinian migrants in different parts of the world" (p. 47).

For the purpose of my argument, I place, following Rumbaut (2004), the first and second generation characters of *Mornings in Jenin* — by which I mean Yehya and Basima and their sons Hasan and Darweesh — within a single 'generational unit' since they are the originally dislocated population of 1948 . For these characters, dislocation is a first-hand experience, despite their differences in age and in their reception of the dispersal experience. They are born in their native land of Ein Hod and can comprehend the rupture of dislocation, although Hasan and Darweesh are not too old to have the land of Palestine "in their bones", like their father Yehya Abulheja. However, since the symbiotic bond with the motherland and its landscapes develops in infancy and the sense of place is internalized in the early developmental period, all these characters have an intense and earnest relationship with Palestine

6.2. Diasporic Subjectivation, Lack of Home and Trans-Generational Transmission

Consonant with my argument in chapter 3, I consider home as a *mirror other* which is constitutive of diasporic subjectivities and whose loss triggers a subjective turmoil, requiring restoration and repair. *Mornings in Jenin* exemplifies turbulences in its characters' subjectivities due to their forced displacement and loss of home. The first generation Abulhejas are active players in the Oedipal drama, in the Lacanian sense, as they experience separation from home first-hand. Further, I advance my argument in line with my theorization of trans-generational transfer of lack of home to the subsequent generations of diaspora in chapter 3. In this regard, I argue that the first-generation characters, functioning as Lacanian *mirrors or others or mothers*, transfer their shattered sense of home, and thereby their lacks, to the succeeding generations in the latter's mirror image stages, to Yousef, Amal and through her, to Sara. The mirror encounters bring the images, or more precisely imagos, of their grandfather Yehya and their parents Hasan and Dalia, which are copiously laden with the experiences of dispersal and lack of home, suffused into their deepest recesses. During the mirror exchanges with these imagos, the second generation inevitably inherits what the imagos have to offer since the exchange is a dual process involving give-and-take at the same time. These inherited lacks obstruct the construction of independent subjectivities of the second and third generation during their formative years. Therefore, subjectivation for these Palestinian diasporic characters takes a different trajectory as it involves tinctures of the past generations coalesced into a motley assemblage, forming pastiched subjectivities. Moreover, these mirror encounters are a recurrent occurrence in the novel, consistent with Lacan's understanding of the Mirror Image Stage as a "stade", permeating various life stages of these characters. What this suggests in the context of the novel is that there is a constant in and out movement of the characters between pre-oedipal and oedipal phases as the story progresses.

It is important to foreground from the outset that two important tools, memory and narrative help this transmission take place, often in conjunction with each other. In the

diasporic contexts, these two modes of transmission — of desires, traumas and repressed anxieties across different generations, oftentimes in an unconscious manner — provide platforms through which later migrant generations construct their past and understand the volatile and liminal nature of their habitats (Chamberlain, 2009). Marianne Hirsch (2012) exploration pertaining to the Holocaust survivors offers interesting insights in which she studies memory as a medium of transferring the psychological and cultural traumas from anterior to posterior generations. She refers to this trans-generational memory as "postmemories"; she says:

> descendants of victim survivors (...) connect so deeply to the previous generation's remembrances of the past that they identify that connection as a form of memory, and that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event. (p. 3)

Oftentimes, these memories travel encoded in narratives, recounted to the younger generations as means of entertainment, simultaneously constructing an imaginary universe of the lost past which can be traversed undeterred. In this way, these narratives help formulate and preserve identities and selves, personal and collective, enmeshed with the geography, landscapes and people, especially in the midst of traumatic living conditions (Sarbin, 1986). They safeguard against the appalling realities of displacement and promise the continuity of what has been endured in the past, remembrance of what is necessary to resist in the present and hope for what is to come in the future.

6.2.1. Pre-Oedipal Jouissance of Pre-Al-nakba Palestine

In the first generational unit of Abulhejas, my focus remains on Yehya, the patriarch of the family, his son Hasan and the latter's wife Dalia owing to the space they occupy in the events of the story. The opening scene of the novel establishes their euphoric condition.

identical to a Lacanian child's paradisal state before entry into the *frustration* stage of Oedipus Complex where his needs are immediately met and there is no sense of want. Abulhawa narrates:

> In a distant time, before history marched over the hills and shattered present and future, before wind grabbed the land at one corner and shook it of its name and character ... a small village east of Haifa lived quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 3).

This opening of the novel from a point before war is a deliberate narrative strategy that foregrounds the centrality of displacement as an event that shook the foundations of Palestine and after which normalcy remains a fantasy. The phrase "in a distant time" clearly demarcates the rhapsodic past from the temporal and spatial realities of the shattered future. The succeeding idyllic portrayal of pre-war Ein Hod further extends the joy with the recounting of myriad details of quotidian lives, love and marriages, harvests, communal relations and the religious fervency. It is time for harvest—contrasted later with its literal meaning when it becomes "the harvest" (p. 30) of Palestine and Palestinians from their land by the Jews —, women sing "the ballads of centuries past" (p. 4) and people prepare to reap the fruits of their toil. Accompanied by his sons Hasan and Darweesh, Yehya readies himself to outperform his friend Haj Saleem in the harvest competition (pp. 3-4). The description of Hasan's joyful youth devoted to reading, his friendship with Ari Perlstein, a German Professor's son and a Jew with a history of Nazi savageries, and Darweesh's adolescent years infatuated by the love of horses provide glimpses of a jubilant atmosphere. At the same time but away from Abulhejas, Dalia, the Bedouin girl and future-wife of Hasan, lives in the ecstasies of her life, indifferent to the scathing eyes and tongues. All this signifies a world of plenitude, the children in perfect union with the mother, yet unperturbed by the threats and the consequent agonies of split from the motherland.

6.2.2. Frustration in First Generation: The Absence of Palestine

Abulhawa brings the pre-oedipal delight into sharp contrast with the terror of posterior narrative, marked with a shattered image of Palestine and the shattered subjectivities of Palestinians. She bestows generous space to the events of 1948 and the ensuant displacement to underscore the importance of the moment in Palestinian lives. She writes:

> In the sorrow of a history buried alive, the year 1948 in Palestine fell from the calendar into exile, ceasing to reckon the marching count of days, months, and years, instead becoming an infinite mist of one moment in history. The twelve months of that year rearranged themselves and swirled aimlessly in the heart of Palestine. The old folks of Ein Hod would die refugees in the camp, bequeathing to their heirs the large iron keys to their ancestral homes, the crumbling land registers issued by the Ottomans, the deeds from the British mandate, their memories and love of the land, and the dauntless will not to leave the spirit of forty generations trapped beneath the subversion of thieves. (p. 35)

Abulhawa demonstrates how this serene and euphoric geographical and cultural landscape of Ein Hod is formative of Palestinian subjectivities, in consonance with my argument on the constitutive aspects of home and its cognates (see chapter 1 and 2). For instance, Yehya's sense of self is structured by the *mirror images* of home, places, people, traditions, history, and community and for all these facets of subjectivity, Ein Hod stands an embodiment. It is a "country within him" whose "terrain is in [his] blood" fused so much that he knows the landscape "better than the lines on his hands", and he knows "every tree and every bird" (p. 44). He can feel the intimate call of harvest "in his bones" (p. 3) indicating an inseparable synthetic bond with his homeland. It is in the backdrop of this inseverable union that he denies his son Hasan's request for education by saying "books will do nothing but come

between you and the land" (p. 10). In the Lacanian sense, this perception of education unequivocally corresponds with the paternal metaphor or the No-of-the-Father which hinders a child's access to the mother and therefore is seen as a threat. Moreover, even Yehya's nye (a musical instrument) remembers the bond forged over centuries by his ancestors and its melodies offer him "a sense of his ancestors, the countless harvests, the land, the sun, time, love, and all that was good" (p. 7). Again, the phrase "all that was good" alludes to the primordial blissful state of the child when a paradisal elation fills its small universe. In this state, Yehya enjoys "the splendor around him" (p. 4), ignorant of the imminent separation that will befall his destiny and that will create an eternal vacuum whose tremors will color the internal structures of his future generations. The end of Yehya's euphoric state of union with the mother(land) is recounted with his moment of rupture — or more precisely the 'mirror alienation'— illustrating the discontinuity of his ancestral lineage as a consequence of his forced departure to Jenin refugee camp:

> Yehya tallied forty generations of living, now stolen. Forty generations of childbirth and funerals, wedding and dance, prayer and scraped knees. Forty generations of sin and charity, of cooking, toiling, and idling, of friendships and animosities and pacts, of rain and lovemaking. Forty generations with their imprinted memories, secrets and scandals. All carried away by the notion of entitlement of another people, who would settle in the vacancy and proclaim it all – all that was left in the way of architecture, orchards, wells, flowers, and charm – as the heritage of Jewish foreigners arriving from Europe, Russia, the United States, and other corners of the globe. (p. 35)

The sense of the "now stolen" land pulsates the sensations of Yehya's forced departure, analogous to the agony of a Lacanian subject upon the absence of mother. It also evokes a strong sense of history dating back to centuries, a sense of place, of traditions and rituals, and of relationships, robbed by a stranger nation. Furthermore, it gestures at the erasure of a culture,

its architectures and landscapes by foreign invaders unschooled in deciphering the whispers of their new habitat. Collectively, these grievously devastating experiences disintegrate Yehya's subjectivity which is grounded in and constructed by the terrains and topographies of Ein Hod.

Like Yehya, his sons Hasan and Darweesh, are also direct recipients of the horrendous experience of displacement, albeit in a different manner, which lead to a turmoil in their subjectivities. Abulhawa is particularly attentive to portrayal of the eldest son Hasan and his life-moulding interactions with his daughter Amal. In one of these encounters when Hasan is telling Amal about an old tree named "old Lady"— itself a metaphorical manifestation of Palestinian rootedness — Abulhawa succinctly captures the obsessive force of motherland hovering over him. Hasan says:

> "We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return. When we die, we return to the land. In a way, she owns us. Palestine owns us and we belong to her" (p. 62).

Hasan's surrender and acceptance of dependency on the devouring mother stems from an uninterrupted Lacanian sensation of jubilance for the benevolent care and 'unconditional love" she provides. The intensity of feelings latent in these words unfolds an unbreakable bond between Hasan and Palestine which is inscribed in the deepest recesses of his mind and is constitutive of his self. It is a place that offers him his great memories of life, of his lasting friendship with Ari Perlstein, and of books that later serve to be his refuge and an instrument to carry on his lineage. As he matures, the motherland tenders her love in the form of Dalia, the Bedouin girl.

The character of Dalia, the wife of Hasan and mother to Yousef, Ismael and Amal, the "wild gypsy, born of Bedouin poetry and colours instead of flesh and blood" (p. 14) also reveals disruptions in her subjectivity caused by displacement. At fourteen, she is falsely charged with stealing Darweesh's horse, and to restore his honour, her father burns her hand publicly. The

punishment leaves a scar on her mind, breaking her from inside after which she develops an orientation towards pulling "the pain inward...[which scorched] the life at her core" (p. 15). The psychic consequences of gasping in the pain and blocking its outlet result in the pain penetrating deep into her which changes her life forever, pressing her to develop a life philosophy that "whatever you feel, keep it inside" (p. 55). At the same time, her body manifests a symptom, a signifier or "an unconscious habit" in which she strokes her right hand's fingertips to and fro on her palm while clenching her teeth, displaying that "she held something in her grip that was living and trying to get out. (p.15).

These traumatic memories of childhood are kept dormant until reactivated by her experiences of loss, the heart-rending and rupturous parting, not only from Ein Hod but also from her son Ismael, her husband Hasan, her father and sisters, and many other countless souls. In the horrific episode of Ismael's snatching from her arms by Moshe — a Jew soldier who wanted to appease the agony of her child-less wife Jolanta — Dalia is not only stripped of her land but also of her motherhood as the snatching symbolizes the seizure of Palestine by Israel and the resultant trauma in both the cases. In this way, Abulhawa emphasizes a break in Palestinian history which changes the course of life for Dalia and for Palestinians as both remain in search of their losses. Being a Lacanian (m)other already situated in the Symbolic Order, Dalia's child typifies a fulfilment of her lack and is a source of meaning in the signifying chain of worldly realities. The sufferance and pain of loss of land and her lack-filling son transform Dalia into a stoic, a patient of dementia who cannot comprehend the corporeal world of signifiers, and for the remainder of her life, is "lost in an eclipsed reality" (p. 32). In the Lacanian sense, she becomes a psychotic subject, a dangling signifier lost in the Real Order which is unable to anchor itself with the signifying chain. From thence after, she bears every painful event with "a feverish grief, cloistering herself in a lock-jawed solitude" (p. 20) and even communicates the "demands and tenders of motherhood with the various tempers of

silence" (p. 52), much to the dismay of Amal who desired a passionate expression of motherly love. In the Freudian sense, this curtailment of pain from going out disturbs her psychic world and, deprives her of the ability to mourn her losses, thwarting her psychic defence mechanisms to function. The losses of her home, her son Ismael, her husband Hasan, her sisters and father and many other countless souls leave her utterly shallowed from the inside. Consequently, she descends into an annihilating *melancholia* in which "she seemed to see nothing" (p. 73), and "roamed the crowded realms of her mind, embroiled in discourse with shadows (p. 109), an impossible state of mourning and a loss of contact with the reality. Abulhawa mentions:

> "Perhaps what made reality fade from her mind was not the unending string of tragedies that befell Palestinians, but rather, an immeasurable love that could not find repose." (p. 275).

6.2.3. Privation: Hostility towards Israel and Temporary Homes

As outlined in chapter 3, diasporic privation involves a relationship of rivalry and antagonism with the father, with those responsible for the absence of the mother — in this case, Israel and the various new locations of residence; simultaneously, there is an earnest attempt to regain the mother, to retain a powerful bond with the homeland. In the same vein, the Abulhejas of the first-generation manifest unceasing love for Palestine, coupled with resentment and hostility towards Israel, that caused the split, and towards Jenin refugee camp. There is frequent reference to Zionists as "sons of whores" (p. 25), "dogs" and "God curse the Jews" (p. 26) signifying a fierce and unrelenting hatred towards the Israelis. In fact, it becomes stronger with each atrocity and every loss, of life, property, relations, most importantly of the self. Likewise, Jenin is a stranger place, un-resembling Eid Hod and therefore a cause of anxiety and disorientation. For Yehya, the stay in Jenin refugee camp exposes him to unfamiliar surrounds and unchartered enclaves. His ego cannot acknowledge the new habitat leading to

an impasse of signification of loss and of movement towards assimilation (Kogan, 2010). Even after the longevity of five years sojourn in Jenin, Yehya is still unable to regard it as his home and develop feelings for it. Abulhawa writes

> "When he realized that his miserable tent in Jenin had turned into clay. The symbolic permanence of the shelter was too much to bear. He would rather have stayed in the cloth dwelling, its leaky top and muddy floor confirming only a temporary exile" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 41)

Practically, the transformation of a cloth tent into a clay shelter offers more security, more privacy and better living conditions; nonetheless, it also stimulates thoughts of forgetting Palestine forever, a cost too heavy for Yehya to bear. In other words, the clay shelter becomes a signifier of no-return which is an utterly inconceivable and preposterous thought, eliciting disconcert. Finally, "defeated by the wait", he decides to return.

> "He took in a premeditated breath, closed his eyes, and exhaled into the nye at his lips, playing a new tune. It was not the sad music of waiting. Nor was it a melody of his heritage. It was a call to the earth. To Allah. To the country within him." (p. 42)

Despite earnest pleadings to avoid his return in these unfavorable times, he refuses, and walks "with purpose and pride" to his familiar landscape (p. 43). In this sense, Yehya resembles what Bruce Fink (1999) calls a "symptomatic patient" who discards all efforts to break away with his symptom. Since all other ways are blocked and the symptom is the only way left that provides him enjoyment, he wants to remain in that "quagmire of libidinal stasis" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 4). He successfully crosses the border and for days roams "his fields, greeting his carob and fig trees with the excitement of a man reuniting with his family". After spending "sixteen days in the paradise of realized nostalgia", he comes back to Jenin, like a hero because he "had done what five great nations could not effectuate. He had returned" (p. 44). Here, Abulhawa significantly implicates the idea of return to a physical home since Yehya's home is

constructed by people and places, and the physical landscapes of Ein Hod; therefore, his return is only meaningful to him when it is physical. Contrarily, the later generations home is constructed via memory and imagination; it is viable to construct such a home in many different objects and places, the way Amal does.

Yehya while successful in the first attempt falls victim to what Lacan calls insistence of the signifier or the letter — his re-working of the Freudian term 'repetition compulsion' – whereby a subject repeats its behavior that offers him enjoyment in the wake of misery. He plans a second visit after a few days; however, he cannot make it the second time and is killed by the Israeli soldiers. It is as if he "had gone back to die, where he was supposed to die", in the lap of his mother(land) (p. 48), with a smile on his dead face, indicating that he died happily. His death elicits strong feelings in the Palestinian community, prompting them to ask "how was it that a man could not walk onto their own property, visit the grave of his wife, eat the fruits of forty generations of his ancestors' toil, without mortal consequence?" (p. 48). It also invokes a realization that they are "slowly being erased from the world, from its history and from its future" (pp. 48-49) shattering their hope of return. When Yehya's body is readied for burial, the family found "three olives in his hand and some figs in his pockets" (p. 43), which he took along on his final journey as souvenir from his land.

Identically, the novel exposes Hasan's hostility towards Israel after his subjectivity is disturbed by the latter's invasion. When his friend Ari Perlstein broaches the subject of a probable invasion of Palestine by the Jews, he ironically responds, "so these immigrants will let me stay on my own land" (p. 24) in a rising voice. An intense aversion in the tone can be easily sensed which finds an outlet in the form of poetry and his desire for a safe life for his children. Psychoanalytically, the ego strategically redirects his painful experiences and memory, which otherwise would have devastated him, into a constructive domain. In this way, his mornings spent with Amal function as tranquilizers that provide vent to his unspeakable

pain in the form of signification via narrative and also become the vehicles of transmission of his lack. The hostility towards Israel keeps smoldering until the 1967 Arab-Israel war in which a strong sense of loss grapples him for his inability to protect his family and impels him to resist the Israeli atrocities. He is transformed from a "gentle soul" to an "unfamiliar voice" when "something fierce inside him forced its way to the surface" (p. 65). He is thus gone forever leaving Dalia in a perpetual wait, identical to the endless waiting of return to Ein Hod, and the eternal hope of Ismael's return, until she died.

The normal Lacanian route after this rivalry with the Name-of-The- Father — the entity that foments and causes the split between the mother and the child, in this case Israel and the new abodes—for the diaspora is to proceed to the castration stage, by abandoning the antagonism and finding ways to come to terms with the hostland — which I argue are creative in nature. However, the first-generation Abulhejas cannot resolve anxieties of the privation stage and thus, in Lacanian terms, succumb to 'Oedipal fixation with the motherland, leading to various pathological forms of neurosis and psychosis. In other words, Yehya, Hasan and Dalia are subsumed into their home via its surrogates i.e people, places and landscapes and their identities are profoundly shattered by the Israeli occupation, a seizure of their selves. Therefore, they are unable to reconcile with their temporary residence in Jenin and earnestly aspire to return to Ein Hod. The situation also bring to the fore the 'devouring' role of a Lacanian mother (Evans, 2006), during which the child is completely defenseless and is vulnerable to the power of the mother. Likewise, the characters appear to be completely consumed by home , so overwhelmingly that they cannot think beyond it. Consequently, their passage from *privation* to *castration* is blocked due to their neurotic fantasies of loss of home and from a Lacanian standpoint, they live in a stalemate which in turn thwarts the possibility of their creative acculturation in the hostland. By extension, these characters serve to be the

epitomai of the spirit of innumerable Palestinians who grew up learning to love their land but were forcefully deprived of this right.

Nonetheless, based on my argument on transgenerational transfer of lacks to the future generations, I argue that these characters transfer their lacks of home and desire to return to the subsequent generations which include Yousef — dislocated when very young —, Amal — born away from home — and her American-born daughter Sara. During their subjectivation process when their "I" is constructed, these characters introject the lack of the mirrors or the (m)others who are already inscribed in the symbolic order. In this sense, the first Oedipal stage of frustration is installed in the new generation of Palestinians via an inherited lack of home during their subjectivation phase, as elaborated earlier in chapter 3.

6.3. Frustration in the Second Generation:The Absence of Palestine

As mentioned earlier, the stage of frustration is a recurrent phenomenon for the second-generation characters as they are continually displaced from their homes, mainly due to war and violence. Each dispersal fracturs their subjectivities, initiating a series of mirror encounters to reconstruct them and re-install lacking and desiring subjects. And each frustration stage is preceded by pre-oedipal moments of jubilant elation wherein life is full of plenitude since the split with the motherland is yet to be perceived and a contact with the symbolic world of harsh realities is yet to be established. For instance, Yousef has a festive childhood with his jiddo Yehya and with his baba Hasan; his adolescence in Jenin and youth in Lebanon are blithesome, filled with the love of Fatima. Likewise, Amal forms a strong kinship with many homes in the course of the novel i.e in Jenin refugee camp, in Jerusalem orphanage, in America, in Lebanon. In these heterogenous homes, she lives an exhilarated life: of poetry-rich mornings with her father, her cheerful childhood with her best friend Huda, the pair's "delivery mission" of love exchanges between Yousef and Fatima "just like the good old days" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 111),

of her "fondest memories of adolescence" in orphanage (p. 155), and of her loveliest moments with her husband Majid and daughter Sara.

These moments of elated fusion with home come to devastating ends with encounters with various *mirrors/others*, in this case, with the first-generation characters. During their Lacanian *identification* with these ancestral *mirrors*, the latter's lacks of home are transmitted to the second generation and become fused with their respective facets of subjectivity. In other words, the preliminary childhood associations with the grandfather Yehya, in the case of Yousef, and with their parents Hasan and Dalia, in the case of Yousef and Amal both, become moments of unconsciously conveying the traumas — more precisely their lacks — of dispersal from Palestine. These inherited lacks subdue the second-generation's independent subjectivities and axiomatically color their understanding of the world. Further, these inherited lacks mature when they combine with the forthcoming first-hand re-dispersals of the second-generation characters, often horrific and rupturous. To illustrate, Yousef, the eldest son of Hasan and Dalia, the man with a "tentative destiny" (p. 107) is the "Phantom carrier", in Berthin's (2010) words, of his grandfather as well as his parents' lacks — his various Lacanian *others or mirrors* who structure his self and identity. He experiences dislocation as a child when he is unable to cognize the gruesome realities of dispersal and loss; nonetheless, it is engraved in his unconscious as a dogged and grim persistence and becomes a significant structuring principle of his subjectivity, affecting the remainder of his life. He is deeply perturbed by his Jiddo Yehya's death and his "empty chair" (p. 49) between his friends Haj Saleem and Jack O'Malley symbolically represents an emptiness and an absence within him, which frustrates him, like a Lacanian subject's frustration due to the absence of the mother. Moreover, Yehya's regressive journey to Ein Hod and his successful return implicates a sense of defiance in him, lighting a hope of possible return to their stolen home. Abulhawa points towards the conveyance of this rebellious audacity of Yehya when she writes, "for Yousef, not yet 10, his Jiddo's exploit was

a seed that planted itself in his memories of the terrible eviction, and it would germinate at his core a character of defiance" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 44). The event is saved in Yousef's memory and serves as an impetus even thirty years later when he recalls his grandfather's curled moustache—a symbol of defiance and bravery after the latter's return from "the paradise of realized nostalgia" (p. 44).

Yousef is also the recipient of his parents Hasan and Dalia's lack of home. He grows up "in the likeness of his father, his quiet temperament whispering Hasan's legacy" (p. 107). The memories of his father keep returning to him and are a ceaseless inspiration for him. After his humiliation and torture at the hands of Israeli soldiers, especially his lost brother Ismael (now David), he finds solace in the memory of his father and his habit of reading books in the pastures of Ein Hod, under "the conditions of helplessness, grasping at continuity, salvaging what could be kept of their source of strength—Hasan, their baba" (p. 108). Indeed, these conditions shape his character as a fighter in the Palestinian cause, like they did for his father. I argue that these conditions are remnants of his father's lack, his unfulfilled wish to return to Eid Hod, which are repeated in the life of Yousef. Beside his father, Yousef also inherits the lack of his mother as he "turned everything inward" identical to Dalia with a "thick taste of emptiness" (p. 108). He inhaled the manifold faces of torture i.e stripping in front of women and his students and kissing an Israeli soldier's feet, but he does not reveal his grief and it "simmered inside him behind a shell of indifference" (p. 109).

Like her brother, Amal's foundational experiences involve introjections of her parents' lacks. She is born in the Jenin refugee camp in 1955 to Hasan and Dalia, long after the tragic event of *al-Nakbah* when home has already been lost and Ismael has been snatched. Her family's miserable past affects her upbringing and she inherits their cumulative experiences of a lost past and a lost home beside her own sufferings. In this sense, Amal's own experiences are subverted, or as Hirsch's puts it, displaced by the family's collective sufferings. The most

notable influence on Amal is her father Hasan, who is "like a god" to her (p. 51). His morning recitations of poetry for Amal become ritualistic moments of ineradicable carvings and engravings on her mind by the father-god, passing on his legacy to his daughter. Later, Amal acknowledges this transmission of legacy via memory and narrative by saying:

> My life before the war returns to me now in memories bracketed by Baba's arms... my childhood was magical, enchanted by poetry and the dawn... I have never known a more tender time than the dawn,...the dazzling words of Abu-Hayyan, Khalil Gibran, al-Maarri, Rumi. I did not always understand what they wrote, but their verses were hypnotic and lyrical. Through them, I felt my father's passions, his losses, his heartaches, and his loves. He passed all of that to me. This great gift from Baba was something no one could take away. (pp. 60-61)

Right from her childhood, Hasan instills in Amal a hope for life beyond misery via poems and stories which he himself could not actualize and whose desire simmered in him. This hope becomes Amal's guide in remembering, constructing and reconstructing a sense of home in her various new abodes. He acquaints Amal with this plan whose foundations were laid at her birth by saying:

> We named you Amal with a long vowel because the short vowel means just one hope, one wish, ... You're so much more than that. We put all of our hopes into you. Amal, with the long vowel, means hopes, dreams, lots of them. Only six years old then, I grew with the belief that I alone held my father's dreams, all of them. (p. 72)

From a Lacanian standpoint, the quote clearly reveals the structuring role of Hasan in fashioning Amal's subjectivity during which he transmits his love for the lost land, and the desire to return home — in other words, his lacks — to Amal. This pain-rich narrativized history of dislocation implants a strong sense of belonging to Palestine in Amal, hindering the

construction of her independent subjectivity, devoid of the traumatic scars of dislocation. Amal says:

> It sparks an inherent sense of familiarity in me – that doubtless, irrefutable Palestinian certainty that I belong to this land. It possesses me, no matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors (...) Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past. I am a daughter of the land and Jerusalem reassures me of this inalienable title". (p. 140)

This "inalienable title" ensconces/establishes a love of Palestine and a dream of returning to it one day. Later, when a return opportunity becomes viable, she envisions Ein Hod and tries to find consonance between the Eid Hod of passed-on memory and the physical country in its concreteness. She says:

> I conjured all the places of the home that had been built up in my young mind, one tree, one rosebush, one story at a time. I thought of the water and sandy beaches of the Mediterranean— "The Bride of Palestine," Baba called it—which I had visited only in my dreams. A delicious anticipation bore visions of the old life, the one I had never known. (p. 64)

Hasan's passion for education, stifled by Yehya's dissent, imbues an urge in the former to educate his children and realize his unfulfilled dreams. Long after he is gone, Amal recounts her father's advice, "Baba said, the land and everything on it can be taken away, but no one can take away your knowledge or the degrees you earn' (p. 67). Consequently, she develops an intense desire to make her father proud by receiving education for which, she travels to orphanage in Jerusalem and later to America. In other words, Amal's introjection of his father's lack, of home, hope and education transform into an enterprise that inspires her escape from her tragic life conditions and paves the way for her creative acculturation.

In addition to her father, Amal also inherits the lack of her mother Dalia, despite her annoyance with the latter for not being explicit in displaying her love; in fact, she "move[s] as her mirror image" (p. 55). Dalia spots the resurgence of her own smothered spirit as "she could see its reincarnation in little Amal, like a whirlwind of life taking form in her daughter. (p. 51). In Jenin refugee camp when war and violence become normal aspects of their lives, Dalia desires Amal to be strong and courageous; therefore, she bequeaths her life's philosophy and her legacy to Amal in a piece of advice; "Don't be weak and don't get sick. Stern as steel. Whatever you feel, keep it inside" (p. 55). This conviction, along with the symptomatic clenching of the Jaw, remains Amal's lifelong companion in the midst of horrors and losses i.e while leaving for Jerusalem, or when Yousef announces the heart-rending slaughter of his wife Fatima and children in the Sabra and Shatila camp massacre by Israel. Moreover, the 'kitchen hole' episode in which Dalia protects Amal from incessant bombing dictates a shared moment in which the absurdity of her mother's memories is delivered to Amal. Her subjectivity emerges, amidst the callousness of dispersal and life in the bondage of unredeemed aspirations. Years later, Amal comes to a realization while talking to her brother David that Dalia "was the tranquil, quietly toiling well from which I have drawn strength all my life" (p. 274). Further, when David questions Amal to know what value he has for Amal, she thinks "No... You and I are the remains of an unfulfilled legacy, heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities and ragged confusion" (p. 270). Beside its reference to Amal, the quote pertains to the scar of David, which metaphorically stands for the scar of his mother Dalia, and a remnant of the day of dispersal and of lacks which "eventually lead[s] him to his truth" (p. 22).

6.3.1. Privation: Hostility towards Israel and various Hostlands

Once the absence of motherland is sensed and the lack of frustration is installed, Amal and Yousef proceed to the privation stage. The movement is accompanied by an intense love

of Palestine and a strong sense of animosity against the Jewish invaders and against the various new homes they inhabit. Like frustration, privation also entails sporadic in and out movements, particularly in the case of Amal, during which she displays ambivalent feelings in relation to her new habitats. At the same time, these movements once again accentuate the role of home as a devouring Lacanian mother which shadows Amal wherever she goes as an engulfing obsession difficult to part with. On the other hand, Yousef's inherited lacks of home coupled with his personal experiences drive his hatred towards Israel which remains constant throughout. He is galvanized by his ancestor's narratives and memories signifying the collective mortifications of the people of Palestine via their loss of homeland; at the same time, his repeated humiliations and dislocations also ignite his anger for the Israeli oppressors. Together, these trauma-packed narratives of expulsion, personal losses and insults instigate him to dedicate his life to fighting for the Palestinian cause as a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Despite his disgraceful detention and torture at the hands of Israeli soldiers, he remains undaunted and focused on freeing Palestine. Before leaving for his final fight against the oppressors, he writes to Amal that "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" (p. 99). The scene is reminiscent of Yehya's defiant return to Ein Hod, both of which signify the 'secondariness' of life when it comes to returning home. In fact, Yousaf's indomitable struggle to regain his homeland derives its inspiration from the treasured memories of pre-war Palestine and his ancestors and also bespeaks of the shared struggle of the younger Palestinians. These intimate experiences captivate his inclination to acculturate; therefore, his journey through Lacanian Oedipal stages comes to a halt impeding his accession to the castration stage.

Likewise, Amal makes advances towards the privation stage via developing feelings of antagonism against her new dwelling. After her migration to the US, she thinks of herself as

"free of inherited dreams"; however, the impossibility of such a reverie dawns upon her when she says: "Palestine would just rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced .... It was a persistent pull, living in the cells of my body, calling me to myself" (p. 175). At the same time, the unfamiliar environment of America stimulates her anxieties; she recounts:

> FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY MARKED (emphasis in original) my first months in America. I floundered in that open-ended world, trying to fit in. But my foreignness showed in my brown skin and accent. Statelessness clung to me like bad perfume and the airplane hijackings of the seventies trailed my Arabic surname. (p. 169)

This is indicative of a quintessential diasporic state after encountering the unwelcoming hostland environment that vehemently alerts migrants of their foreignness. In addition, Amal's anxieties are further aggravated by the incongruent social conventions of American society and personality traits of the people she meets. For instance, she considers a mere "thank you, an insufficient expression" (p. 170) as compared to the lengthy utterances spoken in gratitude among Arabs, often loaded with prayers. Further, she also finds it hard to socialize with her host family in America, their luxurious lifestyle, with the "enormity of their home" (p. 171). There is "no commonality" between her and the self-assured Americans surrounding her and she feels "diminished, out of place, and eager to belong" (p. 172). The difference indeed stems from her ever-present exoticism which asserts itself even in the affluence of American life. She narrates:

> As if to brace myself with context in that big bed, I reached to the past, moving my hand over the mangled skin of my belly. Snuggled in luxury on the threshold of a world that brimmed with as much promise as uncertainty, I was starting a new life. But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me. (p. 171)

Her primal and everlasting bond with her homeland makes her acculturation in America an arduous enterprise. She narrates that "I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of the banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world" (p. 179).

6.3.2. Castration: The Finding of a Provisional Home

Accordant with my argument in Chapter 3, Castration entails giving up contention with the father, and constructing an independent identity of a lacking and desiring subject, with the ache of split lurking at the back, always present. In the context of diaspora, this is suggestive of abandoning rivalry with the host culture — a substitute for the Lacanian No-of-The-Father — and synchronously making attempts to acculturate, with residues of lost home eternally present. An important step at this juncture is the recognition of one's lack as an ineradicable fact that persists as an incurable wound (Allen & Ruti, 2019) since it helps subjects to negotiate with the lack and placate, if not obliterate, the resultant suffering. The process involves creating newer forms of day-to-day existence; hence I refer to it as creative acculturation. In the context of novel, Amal's castration is intricately complex as the "persistent pull" of Palestine hinders her acculturation in her various dwellings, in Jerusalem's orphanage after her father disappeared, her brother Yousaf joined the resistance and her mother died: in America, in Lebanon's Shatila camp, and her return to the US in the wake of Israeli attack on her home. In all these places, her subjectivity is structured and unstructured continually by her interpersonal relationships, by her father Hasan, her husband Majid and daughter Sara and the shared narratives of Palestine. From a Lacanian perspective, her character demonstrates a constant inter-stage movement between Oedipal phases of subjectivation. On the one hand, her bond with Palestine and her sense of belonging, constructed through memories and narratives, restrains her acculturative process; whereas on the other, the friendship at Jerusalem orphanage

and the prosperity and opulence of America compels her to abandon her love for homeland, and the antagonism against her new habitat. Most importantly, Dalia's legacy of keeping the pain inside remains substantially helpful as it enables Amal to acculturate by "easily do[ing] away with the pain of loss and separation" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 155).

In Jerusalem's orphanage, the inherited loss of home provides Amal an opportunity to exercise her creativity to turn a situation to her psychic or physical advantage. There is "nothing left for [her] in Jenin, but scraps of [her] childhood and the debris of the family lost forever" (p. 158); therefore, she uses the agony of her sufferings as an antidote and forges an unbreakable bond with the other orphaned girls amid memories of their traumatic pasts and that "bond was Palestine. It was a language [they] dismantled to construct a home" (p. 165). Abulhawa's use of metaphor of language for Palestine indicates the latter's constitutive nature which structures Amal and her cronies' sense of home, in synergy with memory. Further, her loss makes her understand the new factualities of life and urges her to press forward. When Huda visits her in the orphanage, she thinks that:

> " I learned to make peace with the present by unknowingly breaking love lines to the past. Growing up in a landscape of improvised dreams and abstract national longings, felt temporary to me. Nothing could be counted on to endure, neither parents nor siblings nor home. Not even one's body, vulnerable as it was to bullets. I had long since accepted that one day, I would lose everything and everyone..." (p. 156).

Her literal acceptance of losing everything metaphorically alludes to her unconscious' realization of the indelibility of lack. In this regard, the breaking of "love lines" with the past is a creative strategy of reaching a compromising settlement amidst the agony of her lack and desire.

Similarly, in America, she devises a series of stratagems to dislodge the inherited burden of her past generations in an effort "to belong and find relevance in the West... tucking

[her]self into an American niche with no past" (p. 173). These moves are inevitably rooted in her lack and desire through which she attempts to situate herself and find compatibility with the American culture. She changes her name, from Amal to Amy— which means "Amal without the hope" — and becomes "a word drained of its meaning. A woman emptied of her past ...[who] "wanted to be someone else"(Abulhawa, 2010, p. 178). On the one hand, the new name resonates with the American tones of naming whereas on the other, it signifies a slackening of the generationally transferred lack of her father Hasan. Commenting on her acculturation, she narrates:

> I metamorphosed into an unclassified Arab-Western hybrid, unrooted and unknown. I drank alcohol and dated several men... I spun in cultural vicissitude, wandering in and out of the American ethos until I lost my way. I fell in love with Americans and even felt that love reciprocated. I lived in the present, keeping the past hidden away. (p. 174)

Furthermore, she severs connection with her family and friends, cutting the umbilical cord that typifies her mother(land) and instead, forges "real ties in America" which after many years of stay has "become part of [her]" (p. 182). In her first meeting with Majid, she admits her subdued love for Jenin; She says, "I had nothing, no one, to go back to. And to be honest, I wanted to be an American. I wanted to pack away my baggage of past and tragedy and try on Amy for size" (p. 186).

In the same vein, her journey of creative acculturation continues in Lebanon where she endeavors to acclimatize after contacting Yousef. As soon as she lands in Lebanon, a sense of Arabness overpowers her as she "feels good to be on Arab soil again" (p. 186) and "satisfyingly ...[becomes] Amal once again, not anonymous Amy" (p. 195). She falls in love with Yousef's friend Majid, marries him and finds a (sense) of home in him, away from Palestine once again. Abulhawa writes:

"At last, fate had surprised her with a dream of her own. A dream of love, family, children. Not of country, justice, or education. Amal would have gone anywhere, as long as Majid was by her side. He became her roots, her country". (p. 209)

This shift of focus, from Palestine to Majid, reflects a creative accommodation materialized inside her, repressing the tragic past and paving the way for a promising present, of making sense of what is available at hand, and ignoring what is lost and gone forever.

However, these exploits of creative acculturation are unsettled by her Palestinianness which shadows her like a "scar from the past" (p. 171) in her various homes. For instance, she narrates that while assimilating in the American culture "sometimes the blink of my eye was a twitch of contrition that brought me face-to-face with the past" (p. 174). This testifies that her past lurks behind her as a constant companion, never ready to part despite her strides towards Americanization. Likewise, it is this seductive allure of the remnants of Palestine that she cannot refuse her brother Yousef 's invitation to join him in Lebanon, despite her fairly comfortable lifestyle in America. After her initial days of creative adjustment with Yousef's family and with Majid in Lebanon, she is once again displaced to America just before the 1982's Shatila and Sabra camp massacre by Israel, with her husband Majid to follow her. However, Majid is lost in the horrific incident, ruining her newly created home embodied in the latter's persona. Widowed and shattered, she starts life anew in the agonizing horrors of the Lebanon massacre and all over again, becomes "a woman of few words and no friends... Amy. A name drained of meaning. Amal, long or short vowel, emptied of hope" (p. 245). Her suffering and pain is taken as anomalous behavior by her colleagues who find these grounds sufficient enough to ill-treat her and label her as "ice queen" and "super bitch" (p. 245).

After reuniting with her long-lost brother David, Amal returns to Jenin after three decade; however, the expected satisfaction of union with home remains surprisingly absent.

She probes her friend Huda's eyes "to find the sense of home, which [she] had expected to feel in Jenin but did not" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 294). This sense of return suggests the role of imagination which keeps the idea of a blissful home intact; however, through the discordance between the real and imagined Jenin, Abulhawa also implies that home once lost cannot be returned like the forever lost object of Lacan , an *objet petit a* or Das Ding. This goes hand in hand with David Lim's (2005) assertion, drawn from Lacan, that "home ...[is] experienced at most as something missed" or a Lacanian "the never-here" (p. xiii). Seen from this perspective, Darian Leader's (2011) analogy accords well with Amal in which he explains a child who cries "'I want my mummy" even after it has found embrace in the latter's arms". Leader argues that the mother, motherland in Amal's case, denotes "something out of reach, something that is now beyond the flesh-and-blood creature in front of them" (p.)

Nonetheless, Amal's father-inculcated hope sets her on the Oedipal journey afresh, this time centered on her daughter Sara, her next *objet petit a*. Moments before her death, she eventually "found home in her daughter's eyes" (Abulhawa, 2010, p. 314), her "precious little girl, [her] life's loveliest song, [her] home" (p. 307). Unquestionably, this is a creative coping mechanism employed by Amal to find an alternative that can mitigate her suffering of lack of home. On the other hand, the reflection of home in Sara's eyes, in Lacanian terms, is a reflection of the passed-on characteristics of the *mirror* or of the *other* to the child. In other words, the lack's journey does not stop at Amal in the novel and extends to the third-generation character Sara. Previously, we are told that Sara is eager to unearth her identity, to get acquainted with her family, and with the "mysteries of her mother" (p. 260) and thus decides to return to Jenin. Amal keeps her history secret from Sara, in the exercise of her mother Dalia's gift of "whatever you feel, keep it inside", yet, surprisingly, she wondered "how the call of Palestine had come to live inside her American daughter" (p. 258). Interestingly, Sara also inherits her grandmother Dalia's ability of "whatever you feel, keep it inside" through her

mother (p. 282). In the midst of horror and chaos, she is frequently confronted with the question of "what it means to be a Palestinian" (p. 314), a question that has remained a lifelong puzzle for her ancestors. Sara communicates to mother's dead soul via an website, signifying the existence of an unbreakable link that keeps on feeding her lack of home. In its own place, her digital interaction with the people and communication of inherited grief is a creative externalization of her lack and this collective Palestinian cause becomes her refuge from the traumatic memories of loss.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored notions of lack of home and diasporic subjectivity in a Palestinian context. It has described home as a Lacanian lack which is elusive and always out of reach and has far-reaching implications for the four diasporic generations of Palestinians. Some characters like Yehya remain fixated on the loss of home like a Lacanian psychotic subject; however, other characters like the protagonist Amal are instigated to move towards adjustment via mini-c and Big-C creative acts of homemaking.

CHAPTER 7

COMPARISON ACROSS NOVELS: LACK OF HOME, DIASPORIC SUBJECTIVITY AND HOMEMAKING

In this chapter, the three diasporic novels selected for this study — *The Namesake, Americanah* and *Mornings in Jenin* — are placed in juxtaposition to discover their similarities and differences in their *subjectivation* or *homemaking* processes. Indeed, a Lacanian perspective as the universal structuring framework of human psyche has served as a synthetic apparatus for the analysis of these diasporic texts; however, the Big Others i.e the contexts of home and host cultures are distinct for each novel and thus pave the way for various discrepancies in the trajectories of diasporic characters' lives and in their constitution of subjectivities. The negotiation of a uniform Lacanian subjectivation process with the particulars of selected diasporic fiction, with their distinct cultures and contexts, provides a solid justification for their cross-examination. Nonetheless, since the novels have already been analyzed separately in the preceding chapters, this chapter only briefly cross-refers to the arguments developed in chapters 4, 5, and 6 to avoid redundancy and focuses more on their points of intersection and (dis)similitude.

7.1. Subjectivation and the Selected Diasporic Fiction

In my discussion of subjectivation in chapter 1 and 3, I have emphasized the universality of psychical development of a subject by means of a *split*, despite the heterogenous interpretations of the nature of this split within the psychoanalytic scholarship. In my subsequent detailed analyses of selected diasporic fiction in chapter 4,5 and 6, I have argued that the formation of diasporic subjects and subjectivity corresponds to this universal process wherein split stands for the split from the motherland. I have shown how the Oedipal stages of *frustration, privation and castration* are applicable to diasporic characters, producing diasporic

subjects of lack and desire who are perpetually haunted by a sense of lack of home and are destined to search for it. However, the Big Other of each context offers a distinctive set of cultural norms, values and traditions by means of which the diasporic subject negotiates its terms of living for its homemaking and acculturation in the hostland. It is from the rich cultural heterogeneity of these contexts that the protagonists' fantasies draw their objects to meet the demands of lack and to sustain their desire for home. The characters' constant pursuit of these fantasy objects enables their creativity and helps in constructing their subjectivities and homes resulting in their provisional acculturation. In other words, these variations in the conditions and causes of displacement—where unique cultural and contextual agents, despite a uniform psychic mechanism, produce divergent effects—consequently lead to variance in homemaking practices via a multitude of creative forms.

7.1.1. Pre-Oedipal Jouissance of Unity with the (M)other(land)

As described in chapter 3, a Lacanian subject remains in a pre-Oedipal phase of perfect unity with the *(m)other* prior to the inception of its subjectivation process; identically, the diasporic characters in the three novels under analysis remain in a state of blissful union with home—a stand-in for various primary others. Prior to the experience of loss of home, they are perfectly 'enmeshed' with the mother(land) where their needs are fulfilled. For instance, *Americanah* describes Ifemelu's euphoric moments of unity with her various Nigerian (m)others, primarily her first love Obinze through whom she constructs her sense of 'social self'. She is not yet introduced to the (in)significance of her black color and the prejudices that will come to be conjoined with it when she migrates from Nigeria to America. Interestingly, if this pre-oedipal state has not been explained at length in the pages of the text, one can retroactively trace it from the events of the stories. To illustrate, Ashima's post-migration anxieties in *The Namesake* undoubtedly allude to the existence of such a phase although

Jhumpa Lahiri does not spell out the pre-migration phase of Ashima in great detail; there are incessant references to a jubilant life in India, to large Bengali family gatherings, foods and religious rituals. It is the absence of those jubilant markers that cause a rupture in Ashima's diasporic subjectivity. In the same vein, *Mornings in Jenin* opens with a paradisal state before the displacement of Al-nakba describing the quotidian routine of the first-generation characters in the elysian atmosphere of Ein Hod. There are harvests, marriages, rituals, gossips and stories steeped in buoyancy. The subsequent generation of Palestinian diaspora prior to the psychic installation of lack of home—as I have argued in chapter 1 and 3— remain in a state of paradisal union with the mother. For instance, Amal's life in Jenin refugee camp is filled with a paradisal solitude, with her father's recounting of poetry in the mornings, Huda's friendship, her "fondest memories of adolescence" in orphanage (p. 155), and her moments with her husband Majid and daughter Sara.

7.1.2. The *Lack* of Frustration

Frustration in the three selected novels involves the absence of home(land), analogous to the absence of mother in the first crisis moment of Oedipus Complex in Lacan. Home becomes absent via the characters' dislocation which shatters their subjectivities necessitating their subjectivation. Nonetheless, despite displacement being a common denominator across the three novels, the nature of displacement is unique in each case. In Lacanian terms, the Name-Of-The-Father (the force of prohibition) causing the split in each case of dislocation is different. To illustrate, *The Namesake* characters, Ashoke and Ashima belong to the 'pull' category of economic migrants who migrate to America for the purpose of better living conditions, employment opportunities and the possibilities of social progression. *Americanah* falls in the category of partially voluntary migration— midway between the voluntary and the involuntary or the 'pull' and the 'push'— because the political instability and pervasive

corruption in Nigeria are the chief determinants of Ifemelu's decision to migrate to America for better academic opportunities and lifestyle. On the contrary, migration in *Mornings in Jenin* is involuntary and violent, made compulsory by the invasion of Palestinian lands by the Israel.

Identical to the dissimilarity of the agent of separation (the Name-Of-The-Father) in each of the novel, the signifiers that evoke the sense of absence of the mother(land) are also different. In *The Namesake*, the lack of home is sensed through its various markers i.e the absence of familial love, Bengali foods, rituals and traditions which are evocative of anxiety and frustration. As discussed in chapter 4, there is nothing 'normal' for Ashima in America due to the absence of markers of home which were abundantly available to her in India. The radical shift in the environment, the unfamiliar faces surrounding her in the hospital, the insipid non-Indian foods, and the absence of rituals and of community in them brings a strong sense of estrangement. Identically, the lack of home is experienced in *Americanah*, but in two different ways. Primarily, when Ifemelu migrates from Lagos to Nsukka (within Nigeria), the oddity of Nsukka disorients her because it is "too slow, the dust too red, the people too satisfied with the smallness of their lives" (p. 89). However, the lack of home takes altogether different connotations in America and comes to be associated with her blackness, a cultural marker of Africanness, of Nigerianness and thus, of home. The overwhelming presence of whiteness around Ifemelu grants her blackness a derogatory distinctiveness, hitherto unknown to her under whose influence she considers "her body unsure of itself, overwhelmed by a sense of newness" (p. 106). This all-encompassing whiteness triggers a strong sense of absence— of blackness, of black culture, of a jouissance steeped in the blackness of home— and engenders a *lack of frustration*. The absence of home is sensed even more intensely in *Mornings in Jenin* due to the forced nature of displacement. The first generational unit of Abulhejas experience the loss of home, landscapes, and relationships, in the harrowing episode of separation from their motherland. For Yehya, the loss of "forty generations of childbirth and funerals, … sins

and charity... imprinted memories, secrets and scandals" (p. 35) is unbearable, the permanence of a sheltered home in refugee camp is unacceptable, and he accepts death in the lap of his motherland which is a metaphorical attainment of primordial jouissance. Similarly, Yehya's son, Hasan—whose *Weltanschauung is* "Palestine owns us and we belong to her"— is appalled by the agonies of loss of family, of friendship with Ari Perlstein, and of his books and memories. Likewise, the second-generation characters experience the anxiety of forced dispersal from Palestine: Yousef in the absence of his jiddo Yehya and his love Fatima (both stand-ins of home), while Amal in the absence of his father's poetic mornings, Huda and the orphan girls' memories. These disparities in the agents of dislocation and the signifiers of mother land, as I will explain in the forthcoming pages, will eventually lead to disparities in the homemaking or acculturation of the characters.

7.1.3. The Lack of Privation

The privation stage in the selected novels involves antagonistic rivalries with the host culture and with the agents of displacement. In fact, the characters' channeling of aggressivity onto these elements offers an escape route to the anxieties of separation. In *The Namesake*, Ashima is perturbed by the influence of American culture, its unfamiliar cultural and social ethos which consequently turns into abomination and antagonism. For instance, she is resentful of American foods, of her pregnancy and of raising a child in the foreign land of America. In *Americanah*, the unfamiliar and foreign America invokes strong memories of home for Ifemelu. The dry air of Philadelphia jogs her memory of Nsukka and brings "a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears" (p. 145). In addition, the institutionalized racism of the American society against the blacks becomes the center of enmity for Ifemelu when she, like other black people, is judged based on her skin color and not

on the traits of her character. Her African hair also becomes the defining feature of her "unprofessional" character (p. 119) and is "just not damn normal" (p. 296).

At the same time, the privation stage involves characters' attempts to establish intimate connections with the mother, their homeland. Ashima retains her connection with India through the practices of Naming, Bengali foods, and Bengali rituals. During her pregnancy, she is desirous of an uncanny amalgamation of Rice Krispies, Planters peanuts, and chopped onion, into which are added salt, lemon juice and green chili pepper. Such a "concoction" is a "humble approximation" of a snack she bought on Calcutta sidewalks, which evokes her memories and becomes part of 'something missed'. Ashima and her husband Ashoke show reluctance to name their child as they consider it a violation of the tradition and a break from the past which is unimaginable. Gogol's *annaprasan* or rice ceremony is another ritual that they celebrate with great zeal.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, the displaced generations of Abulheja's show relentless love for Palestine paired with animosity and aversion towards Israel, the cause of their displacement. Each act of violence, and the mortalities exacerbate this hatred, making reconciliation impossible. At the same time, the multiple new habitats i.e Jenin refugee camp, America, do not elicit the feelings of being at home for these characters, initially in some cases and are disregarded. For instance, Yehya's indifference to the permanent shelter in Jenin camp — a signifier of no-return — suggests a refusal to accept the impossibility of return to Palestine. In the same manner, Amal develops antagonistic feelings towards her new home in the US where "feelings of inadequacy" are manifest in her initial days (p. 169). Her foreignness is her defining feature which is incompatible with the social norms of America.

7.1.4. The Lack of Castration

In the castration stage, the characters of the novels gradually abandon their rivalries with the various destination of their migrations, chiefly America, because of the latter's formidable position. From a Lacanian perspective, the host culture is a stand-in of the all-powerful name-of-The-Father who cannot be surmounted and against whom the diasporic migrant's animosities are nugatory trivialities. By accepting the dominance of the host culture, the diasporic migrants accept their loss of homes, enabling the installation of a lack of home which in turn sets their desire in motion. The characters thus resort to homemaking or acculturation, albeit in their recognizably distinct manner, which never ceases despite the characters' success in creating transient homes in their various abodes. After some time, the momentary feelings of at-home dissipate, usually due to some external stimulus and the homemaking starts anew, via the Oedipal moments of *frustration, privation and castration.*

In *The Namesake*, Ashima gradually gives in to the hegemony of the Big Other of American culture and engages in homemaking or acculturative practices, with her lack of home lingering behind. She renounces her inharmony with the American culture and by metamorphosing from an ordinary Bengali housewife into a multi-trait persona, she attunes herself to the ways of the American society. Along with her husband Ashoke, she celebrates Christmas, Thanksgivings and Easter more fervently than Durga Puja. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's lack of home drives her to engage in homemaking in her numerous homes in the course of the novel. In her first displacement to Nsukka from Lagos, where she initially feels discomforted, she finds "many options for belonging" (p. 89), under the aegis of Obinze and her mother.

In America, after the inceptive anxiety-ridden days in Aunty Uju's home in Brooklyn, she acclimatizes herself with the people, especially Aunty Uju's son Dike, and the surroundings. When she moves to Philadelphia, "SHE HUNGERED to understand everything about America, to wear a new, knowing skin right away" (p. 135). She fights racism with her

blog writing, an art that transforms her agonies into signification, rescuing her from neurosis or psychosis. In her relentless homemaking, she returns to Nigeria, disillusioned by the American society and culture, but has to undergo acculturation once again, ironically in her original physical home. She responds to her ex-boyfriend Curt's queries by saying, "I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" but even here, "she wished it were different. If only she could feel what she wanted to feel" (p. 476). The episode emphasizes home as a fundamental lack, always beyond the reach.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal's homemaking attempts in her various habitats, i.e in orphanage, in America and in Lebanon are inhibited by the "persistent pull" of Palestine. Her subjectivity constantly moves across the stages of Oedipus complex, deriving its foundations from her relationships, mainly her father, husband and daughter and the narratives of Palestine. However, she puts her suffering into the service of acculturation by forging intimate ties with the orphaned girls and by "breaking love lines to the past" (p. 156). In America, she likewise disburdens herself from her past and her ancestors in order "to belong and find relevance in the West" (p. 173). She anglicizes her name, and becomes 'Amy' from Amal, drinks alcohol, goes on dates, and falls in love with the Americans, indicating formation of "real ties in America" (p. 182). Her creative acculturation carries on even when she moves to Lebanon to meet her brother Yousef. The moment she disembarks from the plane and sets her foot on the land, she "feels good to be on Arab soil again" (p. 186) and "satisfyingly ...[becomes] Amal once again, not anonymous Amy" (p. 195). There, her would-be husband Majid "became her roots, her country" (p. 209).

By and large, the discussion above has revealed that although Lacanian subjectivation offered uniform mechanisms for the construction of subjectivity, the variant nature of mirrors and objects, of the forces that shape one's subjectivity, leads to varieties of homemaking or acculturative practices.

7.2. America as the Big Other

America as the country of arrival features in all the novels under analysis; however, for some characters, it serves as the final destination whereas for others, it is an evanescent abode, and yet for few, it is a site of re-dispersal and re-arrival. It occupies the place of a Big Other, in the Lacanian sense, with a particular form of 'gaze' and a consciousness, through which it perceives other cultures and societies in a certain way. It exists at the center of characters' negotiation with their lack by means of which they manage the suffering of their dislocation.

In the Namesake, Ashima voluntarily arrives in America, subjectivates herself in due course of time and turns to homemaking. Other than usual nostalgia of dislocation and the pain for leaving the loved ones behind, there is little reference to racial or ethnic discrimination in the novel. Contrary to the other two novels under analysis, America appears as a place of affluence where opportunities abound, and a site of forging friendly cross-cultural relationships. America presents itself as a center of trans-culturalism which subsumes a wide variety of casts, creeds and ethnicities, for instance, in the hospital where Ashima gives birth to Gogol, in the library where she works, or in the neighborhood where her family lives. After the death of her husband Ashoke, America turns into a place where a significant part of Ashima resides, compelling her to divide her time equally between India and America. Her children's life routines, their forming and unforming of relationships with both the white and the colored people point towards the accommodative nature of America. This amicability, coupled with her voluntary decision to migrate are the key factors that help her homemaking or subjectivation in America, in contradiction to the other two novels.

Americanah builds on the image of America as a desirable place of migration for the Nigerian people, contrary to the perceptions in *Mornings in Jenin*. Its reasons lie in the historical connection between these two places when the swathes of Nigerian blacks were

transported to the Americas for slavery and labor. However, the significant shifts in the nature of migrations over time, America now is considered a place of opportunity for Nigerians. The tendency is apparent in many of Ifemelu's classmates who either have migrated or are planning to migrate to America to complete their studies. In the same vein. Ifemelu migrates to America, undergoes subjectivation and resorts to homemaking; however, she is juxtaposed to institutionalized forms of racism rampant in the American society which considers blacks as thieves of the White's enjoyment or *jouissance,* as I have argued in chapter 5. Ifemelu's black color, her hair and her accent become determinants of her true character and despite her homemaking strategies, she is unable to create a home for herself. Resultantly, this lack of home eventually leads her to return to Nigeria in search of a home, albeit, to no avail.

In stark contrast to *The Namesake* and slightly different from racism-laden America of *Americanah*, *Mornings in Jenin* portrays a different picture of America. The second-generation protagonist Amal migrates to America twice in the novel; however, her homemaking there is largely restrained by the intensity of intimate memories or lacks of home passed on to her from the first-generation characters. She feels "out of place" (p. 172) in America and her lacking-past shadows "like the scar beneath [her] hand" (p. 171). The narrator informs that "Palestine would just rise up from [her] bones into the center of [her] new life, unannounced" (p. 175). In her case, America's lack of attraction, as opposed to *The Namesake*, is the strong gravitational magnetism of Palestine, made even stronger by the forced nature of her displacement and by memories and narratives of Palestine.

The differing treatment of America towards various characters and the latters' non-identical responses point towards the differing nature of relationship between the home and the host countries, or between different Symbolic Orders. The characters creatively adjust their homemaking or acculturative strategies in accordance with the nature of these relationships and thus secure transient moments of satisfaction for themselves.

7.3. The Choice of Return to the Home of Lost Jouissance

Contrary to the past, modern affordable means of travel have made visits and returns to the homeland possible. Resultantly, people can travel freely between countries, visit their physical homes and can resettle there. However, I argue that return to a physical home is in fact another dislocation, to a new home since home and the diasporic migrant both undergo irreversible changes after the first displacement; therefore, neither the place of return nor the person returning are same. This resonates with Heraclitus' maxim of the impossibility of stepping into the same river twice because the water and the person both have changed. The argument has been substantiated by several studies which reveal that returnee migrants are in constant state of homemaking in their places of origin, and are constantly negotiating their identities (Chan & Tran, 2011; Christou, 2006; Potter, 2005). Migrants experience 'reverse culture shock' upon return home (Conway & Potter, 2016) as they find the geography of homeland and the attitudes of people greatly changed which do not evoke a sense of 'being at home' in them. In line with my argument, homemaking in the hostland, acculturation and return to originary home, all signify a similar endeavor, that is, to fill the lack of home. In other words, they in fact represent an attempt to re-instate the primordial blissful state of *jouissance*, ignited by the lack of home. However, since lack cannot be filled, the jouissance is always out of reach, suggesting that return home, physical or imaginary, is an illusion and any provisional sense of being at home is in fact a short-lived fantasy that delusionally veils the impossibility of regaining home.

In the novels under analysis, the idea of return has been dealt uniquely, in line with the socio-political milieu of each context. There is no restriction on return home in *The Namesake* and *Americanah* due to their respective voluntary and semi-voluntary nature of displacement. Therefore, the characters decide to return to the country of origin in their constant search for the primordial home when the fantasy surrogate homes of their respective

contexts cannot offer the lost jouissance of primordial unity. Ashima makes occasional trips to India and even decides for longer stays after the death of her husband; however, India no more exists as her home now and has ceased to gratify her sense of being at home. Similarly, Ifemelu returns to Nigeria after being dissatisfied with her American home: however, she finds Nigeria a different country from the one she left years ago. In the case of *Mornings in Jenin*, however, the choice of return to Palestine is not an option and there are strict restrictions in place by the Israel government. Yehya is killed on his second secret visit to Ein Hod, while Hasan, Dalia and Amal are denied entry into their home. When a rare opportunity presents itself to Amal, arranged by her Jew brother David, she seizes it and returns to her home in Ein Hod. Supposedly, it functions as a vehicle of accessing her lost Jouissance; nonetheless, she does not find her lost home in Ein Hod, but in her daughter's eyes. The shifting nature of home in these novels where it is incarnated in several different things, objects and places at various occasions emphasizes the fact that home is a lack that is never filled and is perpetually deferred.

7.4. Trans- Generational lack

In two of the selected novels—*The Namesake* and *Mornings in Jenin*—the lacks of home of first generations are transferred to their subsequent generations in agreement with my argument in Chapter 3. In *The Namesake* (see chapter 4), the second-generation child Gogol inherits his parents lack of home, especially through his name 'Gogol' which structures his subjectivity and determines his future life. Being neither Indian nor American, the name Gogol becomes a lifelong adversary impeding the namesake's attempts to anchor himself to a home, either Indian or American. Gogol engages in a long battle with the effects of his name and roams from one fantasy object to the other, i.e. Maxine, Moushumi, the process of name-change into Nikhil, in order to find a home; however, the latter's fictional nature redirects his desire in a new direction. He is required to find its way after making adjustments, compromises or losses

in line with the demands of the Big Other. Towards the end of the novel, he accepts the reality of his name and reads 'the overcoat' after the death of his father. In the Lacanian sense, this is an acceptance of the imposition of the law of the father and the becoming of a castrated lacking subject. In *Mornings in Jenin, however,* the transgenerational transfer of lack of home occurs through memory and narratives which are the alternative means of maintaining connections with Palestine owing to the forced nature of displacement and the impossibility of return. These memory-drenched narratives are significant modes of passing the ancestral lack of home to the future generations in the mirror encounters with the *others* during the subjectivation process. For instance, Yehya transfers his lack to Yousef, Hassan transmits it to Amal, which become essential constituents of their subjectivity and drive their actions in the later life.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has collated the selected works of diasporic fiction with each other and has elaborated on their differences and similarities in the light of Lacan's concept of lack. The juxtaposition has revealed significant psychical similarities in the way the characters subjectivities are recurrently fractured and re-constituted in agreement with Lacanian subjectivation and the three moments of *frustration, privation and castration*: however, since the texts under analysis are from contextually different diasporic geographies or from different Big Others, the causes and consequences of dispersals are distinct and therefore result in divergent homemaking or acculturative outcomes. Displacement in *The Namesake* is voluntary, semi-voluntary in *Americanah* and involuntary in *Mornings in Jenin*. Naming, food and rituals are the predominant homemaking activities in *the Namesake:* on the contrary, blackness and racism are the chief homemaking ventures in *Americanah*, whereas *Mornings in Jenin* exemplifies memory and narrative as the principal enterprises of homemaking. Despite their dissonance, all these modes of homemaking are triggered by lack of home via the desire to

fulfil the lack and are subject to the function of the fantasy which seemingly promises the primordial jouissance of return to the motherland but fails to achieve it at every instance.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This study is a theoretical conjuncture between Lacanian psychoanalysis, diasporic fiction, and creativity; it explores the constitutive nature of diasporic *lack of home* for diasporic subjectivity and its creative dimensions that help in diaspora's *homemaking* or acculturation in the hostlands. By focusing on three diasporic texts by different authors, from three different geographical and cultural settings, the study has attempted to answer the following three questions: (a) How is diasporic displacement (and loss of home) synonymous to Jacques Lacan's subjectivation process? (b) How do the selected novels manifest the Lacanian lack in their character's desire for home? (c) How does the diasporic lack of home act as a catalyst for the characters' creativity, resulting in a perpetual desire for homemaking or acculturation?

In order to address the first question, the study has brought disparate established connotations of home and its loss under scrutiny in which home is viewed as a stand-in for various first object-relations in human psychic and social development and thus is constitutive of human self, identity and subjectivity. When this home is lost in displacement, it is tantamount to the loss of these object-relations which is profoundly damaging to the human and by extension diasporic subjectivity. Extending this argument with the help of Lacanian psychoanalysis, this study has argued that home is a Lacanian lack, a fundamental structural void that is created in the process of subjectivation or subject formation. Identical to the obstruction of a child's jouissance of perfect union with the mother via splitting, a diasporic subject's mode of jouissance with the motherland is impeded via splitting, installing a perpetual lack of home.

From this perspective, it becomes important to understand the parallels between the formation of Lacanian and diasporic subjects and subjectivities (or subjectivation). I have argued that diasporic subjectivity, which is disturbed in the displacement process, is continually

re-constituted in agreement with Lacan's *subjectivation* which entails the three logically (not chronologically) sequential stages or three moments of (Oedipal) crisis namely, *frustration, privation, castration.* The lack of *frustration* involves the absence of and separation from home or motherland and hence, the absence of love — analogous to the absence of mother in the first stage of Oedipus Complex. The lack of *privation* entails antagonism with the father— hostland or any other agent that causes displacement—who imposes prohibitions on diasporic jouissance by taking the mother away. Finally, the lack of *castration* includes an acceptance of the law of the father and an abandoning of the previous rivalry with it, which thereby installs a lack that the mother is lost forever. In the context of diaspora, it means giving up rivalry with the host culture and a movement towards homemaking or acculturation, however provisional. The process subjectivates a diasporic subject, installing a *lack of home* that in turn triggers a perpetual desire for the lost object, for the *objet petit a* home which always remains out of reach. This understanding of diasporic subject and subjectivity as lacking is unique in the sense that it gives positive connotations to the loss of home by situating this loss at the structural level of diaspora's construction. Like a Lacanian subject, which is constitutively the subject of *lack*, the diasporic migrants inherently *lack* a (mythic) home to which they yearn to (mythically) return. This conception of home as *lack* or *object a* is a psychoanalytic response to the questions of loss of home that animate diaspora studies and fiction. With the help of Lacanian lack, this study sums up the location of home in Lacan's register of 'the real' which cannot be accessed but which always remains as a target of diasporic desire and thus assumes a driving role in the lives of diaspora. The mutual dialogue of desire and fantasy keep diasporic desire active on its quest for the *object a home*, and never at peace with the surroundings.

An important aspect of the lacking subject thus formed is its volatile and 'becoming' nature. The subject attempts to fill this lack and thus instigates a desire for the lost object, in this case lost home. Since the lost object cannot be regained because it is part of Lacan's register

of 'the Real', the function of fantasy becomes important which provides surrogates of home in order for the subject to pursue its desire. However, a 'becoming' subjectivity never arrives at its destination and is always postponed, but it perpetually continues its negotiations with the various fantasy construct homes. In other words, home and subjectivities are a permanent work-in-progress, always negotiated in unison with the evolutionary changes in their meanings over time due to various contextual, inter-contextual and extra-contextual factors.

The second question of this study relates to the selected texts where the agents and consequences of diasporic loss of home in three different contexts are analyzed. The Lacanian analysis of diasporic subjects in the fiction of three diasporic writers — Jhumpa Lahiri, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Susan Abulhawa — exemplifies the characters' continuous efforts to re-constitute their subjectivities in their new habitats via numerous homemaking practices. In these novels, home as a Lacanian lack or *object a* triggers the characters' subjectivation and paves the way for their provisional settlement in the host societies. The novels center on diaspora's split from the motherland in the subjectivation process: however, the causes and consequences of this split vary which elicit a diversified response from the characters with regard to the treatment of their psyche. *The Namesake* presents a voluntary displacement for better opportunities and lifestyle in which Lahiri portrays the first and second-generation migrants' life experiences in America. *Americanah*, on the other hand, is a semi-volitional migration where Adichie delineates the experience of dispersal and acculturation and re-dispersal of black people in America where racism determines their destiny. In contrast, *Mornings in Jenin* describes a completely forced and recurring dispersal of Palestinians in the wake of Israeli occupation. The diasporic characters' subjectivities are continually shattered due to various reasons, distinct in each text, which chiefly originate from their respective cultures i.e., naming and food in *The Namesake*, blackness and racism in *Americanah*, and violence and bloodshed in *Mornings in Jenin*. The incompatibility of these factors with the host

societies activates lacks of home and then restarts the cycle of subjectivation, aided by the function of fantasy. The diasporic characters drift into homemaking or acculturation via practices that apparently seem to bring back the primordial jouissance of unity with the motherland. It resorts to various creative forms in his endless pursuit of filling the lack; however, its efforts cannot and therefore does not reach its desired destination because such a state is unachievable and is at odds with the fundamental structural 'lack' of diaspora.

The third question of the study pertains to the creative nature of this lack of home. Owing to their enigmatic nature for diasporic subjectivities. the questions of loss of home have become ever more critical in the wake of present large-scale movements and the rise of trans-culturalism and thus a persistent literary theme. Whereas conventional psychoanalytic and diaspora approaches regard diasporic loss of home as disruptive of diasporic subjectivity and thus symptomatic of various mental illnesses where its creative potentials are largely overlooked. this study, on the contrary, contends that the *lack of home* and the resultant desire are the source of diasporic creativity. It argues that the diasporic trauma and melancholy emanating from the lack of home is the platform that offers diasporic imagination a flight to the unknown worlds, instigating diaspora to create and innovate. In other words, the *lack of home* instigates diaspora's creative prowess enabling their engagement with numerous homemaking practices in order to create new homes. The diasporic subject endlessly roams in the apertures of various cultures in search of an inexistant destiny: it is unable to find its dream home, the habitat of its lost jouissance; nonetheless ,during the process, it ventures into countless ingenious possibilities of invention await, albeit fused with *sine qua non* misery. In this way, the analysis amplifies as well as contradicts the existing explorations of diasporic subjectivities in various domains of knowledge i.e., postcolonial studies, cultural studies etc.

I conclude this study on how diasporic migrants relate to the concept of home in heterogenous trans-cultural spaces where home is not a fixed place in geography but is

continually re-created in other places, although only provisionally. A feasible option for them is to attempt to comprehend their lack and consider their anxieties originating from it as possible routes to their futures. The incessant construction, de-construction and re-construction of diasporic subjectivities produce a new version of home by means of which diasporic migrants can become citizens of no land and thereby, citizens of every land. While remaining adrift in the interstices of diverse cultures and with their 'becoming' subjectivities, they can become part of this or that culture, regardless of racial, ethnic or cultural affiliations with one nation or country or the other. Their citizen of no land status awards them the freedom to connect and converse with the whole world, with people of different color, creed, ethnicity and gender.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study has employed Lacanian lack as an analytical tool only to the examination of diasporic fiction; however, it has immense potential for the analysis of innumerable domains of knowledge and experience, quantitative and qualitative both. Therefore, future researchers can explore the vast vistas of this concept by applying it to different fields of knowledge. For instance, the application of Lacanian lack can be extended beyond literature and diasporic contexts to explore various fields, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and even the natural sciences. Moreover, as this study is limited only to three diasporic contexts, future researchers can extend it to other geographies and cultures where variant cultural nuances may result in different findings as compared to the ones documented here. Furthermore, the current study has predominantly engaged with fictional narratives. Future research can transition towards empirical or real-life stories of diaspora. This shift allows for a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, potentially revealing patterns, correlations, or unique aspects of the diaspora experience that may not be evident in fiction alone.

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