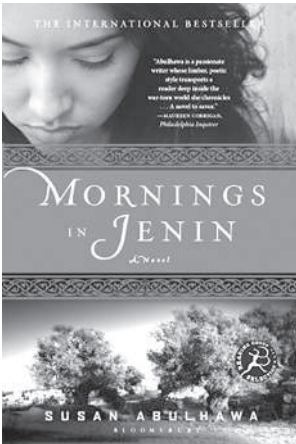


Mornings in Jenin Book Review

by Yoly Zentella



Mornings in Jenin
by Susan Abulhawa.
New York: Bloomsbury, 2010.



Palestinian Nabke Refugees

As I write this, Palestinians continue to live under Israeli occupation. The former, were subjected to the Nakbe, 1947-1949, a span of time during which ancestral lands and homes were confiscated, and groups of Palestinians were removed to refugee camps, murdered and massacred. Palestine was ethnic cleansed to make room for Zionist settlement. The displacement, theft of land and confiscation of Palestinian culture and tradition, continues today with the sanction of Israeli government and support of the military. Such a horrific continuing experience pushes the heirs of this historical tragedy, living both in Palestine and the Diaspora, to describe the legacy of the Nakbe, and of the culture and history of Palestine before and after occupation. Abulhawa's novel contributes to this push.

This novel is important reading for those familiar with Palestine, interested in historical novels, and wanting to delve into lived experiences. It is also a work that appeals to those seeking flowing, absorbing writing; a good combination in which to describe history through fictional characters.

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian-American novelist and activist well acquainted with the occupation of Palestine by the state of Israel. Her parents, born in Jerusalem, Palestine, experienced the Nakbe, the occupation and expulsion from their homes by European Zionists. Her parents were refugees of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Abulhawa was born in Kuwait, 1970. Her background and literary intelligence motivated several novels. *Mornings in Jenin* was her debut work. Since then Abulhawa has risen to the status of most widely read Palestinian author. An activist, Abulhawa founded *Playgrounds for Palestine*, an organization making possible the building of playgrounds for Palestinian children, replacing childhood spaces lost through Israel's destruction of Palestinian communities by bombings, home demolitions, and settler violence.

She is supporter of *Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)* a non-violent boycott of Israel in a variety of contexts, bringing to light the apartheid circumstances under which Palestinians currently live. Abulhawa is also co-chair of *Pal-*

estine Writes, the first North American Palestinian literature festival.

Mornings in Jenin, tells, over time, of a family caught in the violence of occupation and the response of the main characters living in Palestine and in exile in the Middle East and the U.S. The pain of the experience revolves around two events, the abduction of Amal Abulheja's infant brother, Ismael, by an Israeli military soldier, Moshe, for his childless wife, Jolanta, victim of the holocaust and, the massacre of residents in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon, where Amal's childhood friend and sister-in-law, Fatima, her daughter, and her unborn child, are massacred by the militia of Lebanese forces, orchestrated and supported by Israeli military. These two events unfold against a historical background of the occupation, clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli military, the formation of an underground resistance against Israel and the slow realization of David the Jew, the soldier, of his real identity; that he may really be a Muslim Palestinian named Ismael, stolen as an infant, and raised as a Jew. David's hidden identity, his implication in the beating of his brother Yousef, and meeting his sister Amal decades later, are at the core of the unification of family fragments in Israel. The story is based on fictional characters, however, for those familiar with history of the occupation, the physical and psychological horror of this history is very real. Taken from chronicles and reliable sources as Abulhawa explains in the Author's Note of the book, these historical events can easily be researched by the reader. The characters are playing out possible responses. Chapters 5 and 23 house the principle events that weave in and out of Amal's life.

As in my last review of, *Against a Loveless World*, maps related to the events would have been useful. Strengths are many. The flow of the language, the glossary of Arabic words, description of Palestinian traditions, and the gripping description of emotions, all principle elements of a story,



Massacre Shabra and Shatila, September 16-18, 1982

Notas Y Más

March 2022

Community meetings and cultural art events are again taking place virtually due to continuing concerns about COVID. Check websites, FB or call 210-228-0201 for meetings and events currently scheduled. www.esperanzacenter.org

Glasstire *Glasstire* (Texas visual art) announces the 2022 Central Texas Art Writing Prize contest for emerging arts writers in the greater Austin/San Antonio area. The prize, awarded to a senior undergraduate or graduate student at a Texas University, includes a \$2,500 award. Deadline is March 26, 2022 at 11:59 pm. For details see: bit.ly/glass-tire



The 2022 #FilmSA Contest sponsored by the San Antonio Film Commission seeks to inspire youth to explore filmmaking and gain an appreciation for the city of

San Antonio. Films will address one of two category options: *San Antonio: A UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy* OR *Public Art of San Antonio*. **Submissions deadline is Monday, April 18, 2022 at 4 p.m. CST.** See: www.filmsanantonio.com/News-Events/Film-Contests



Gemini Ink, SA's Writing Arts Center

announces its spring writing classes with renowned writers that include **Edward Vidaurre**, *Texas Poet Laureate* from McAllen, Tx and **Juan Felipe Herrera**, *2015 U.S. Poet Laureate*. For upcoming events and programs, visit geminiink.org or call 210-734-WORD (9673).

albeit tragic, were told well.

There is one glaring truth about *Mornings in Jenin*, the pain it describes is disturbing, and emotionally overwhelming, in particular, the treatment of Palestinians displaced by the Israeli military, the massacre in Shatila, and the arrest and torture of Palestinian children. But the accusations are real, one can research such events in multiple sources. And the description of pain is necessary, if readers are to grasp the seriousness of the occupation. Sometimes experiencing other's pain is a necessary step toward support of a people. This is a book to read.

The next issue will review *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, published in the U.S., 2015.

BIO: Yoly Zentella is a Chicana PhD researcher/writer and editor of *La Platica del Norte*. She lives in Las Vegas, NM.

For more on the issue of Palestine consider this mix:

- Nusseibeh, S. (2007). *Once Upon a Country*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
- Rosenwasser, P. (1992). *Voices from a 'Promised Land': Palestinian & Israeli Peace Activists Speak Their Hearts*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press
- Said, E. W. (1979) *The Question of Palestine*. NY: Times Books
- Weir, A. (2014). *Against Our Better Judgment: How the U.S. was used to create Israel*. If Americans Knew.Org



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