

الباحث

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الشهادة الطيفية ومحو الوجود في الأدب الفلسطيني: أشباح الحضور في روايتي عدنية شبلي
تفصيل ثانوي وابتسام عازم كتاب الاختفاء

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Spectral Testimony and Erasure in Palestinian Literature: Haunting in
Adania Shibli's Minor Detail and Ibtisam Azem's The Book of
Disappearance

عنوان البحث

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ملخص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة إشكالية الغياب والمحو في الأدب الفلسطيني المعاصر من خلال تحليل روايتي عذبة شبلي "تفصيل ثانوي" (٢٠٢٠) وابتسام عازم "كتاب الاختفاء" (٢٠١٩). تجسّد كلتا الروايتين الغياب لا بوصفه فراغاً، بل حضوراً طيفياً يشهد على تاريخ العنف والاقتلاع والإنكار. وانطلاقاً من مفهوم الطيف لدى جاك دريدا، وعلم الاطيف الاجتماعي لدى أيفري غوردون، وتأمّلات شوشانا فيلمان ودوري لاوب حول الشهادة، ونظرية الصدمة لدى كاثي كارث، ومفهوم القابلية للحزن لدى جوديث بتر، اعتمدت الدراسة على التحليل النصي الدقيق للروايتين لتأصيل وظيفة "الشهادة الطيفية". في تفصيل ثانوي، يُروى الحدث الوحشي عبر أسلوب بيروقراطي - تقريري يُسكت الضحية، لكنه في الوقت نفسه يجعل غيابها يطارّد النص ويثقل حضوره، وصولاً إلى اختفاء الراوية المعاصرة نفسها. أما في كتاب الاختفاء، فقد تخيلت عازم زوال الفلسطينيين جميعاً بصورة مفاجئة، محوّلة الغياب إلى حالة طيفية تُربك المجتمع الإسرائيلي وتفضح سياسات الإنكار. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن النصين يعملان بمثابة "أرشيفات مضادة"، تقوّض السرديات الرسمية عبر دفع القراء إلى أداء دور "الشهود الثانويين". وفي الختام، خلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ الشهادة الطيفية لدى شبلي وعازم تمثّل شعريّة فلسطينية متميّزة لعلم الاطيف، حيث يصّر الغائب على الحضور ويستمرّ في المطالبة بالاعتراف

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The Title

Spectral Testimony and Erasure in
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Disappearance*

Abstract

This study examines the problem of absence and erasure in contemporary Palestinian literature through the analysis of Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2020) and Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019). Both novels dramatize absence not as a void but as a spectral presence that testifies to histories of violence, dispossession, and denial. This is done by applying Jacques Derrida's concept of the specter, Avery Gordon's sociology of haunting, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's reflections on testimony, Cathy Caruth's concept of trauma, and Judith Butler's concept of grievability, the study employs a close reading and textual analysis of the selected novels to theorize the function of spectral testimony.. he findings shows that both texts act as counter-archives, unsettling official historiography by compelling readers to act as secondary witnesses. Ultimately, the study concludes that spectral testimony in Shibli and Azem constitute a distinctly Palestinian poetics of haunting, where what is absent continues to insist on presence.

Introduction

Palestinian literature has long functioned as a mode of counter-memory, a cultural practice of preserving histories, identities, and losses that official archives attempt to erase. From Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* to Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, the question of representation under conditions of colonial displacement has remained central. In such contexts, literature is more than an artistic endeavor; it is a form of testimony, a refusal of silence, and an archive of what would otherwise vanish. Yet contemporary Palestinian writers increasingly demonstrate that testimony does not always take the form of direct voice or survivor narrative. Instead, testimony may manifest indirectly, via silence, absence, and haunting. This study examines the phenomenon of absence as a form of presence in two contemporary Palestinian novels: Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2020) and Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019). Both novels focus on disappearance, but they present it in different ways. Shibli tells the story of Israeli soldiers raping and killing a Bedouin girl in 1949 in *Minor Detail*. The writing is cold and detached, like a military report. The girl stays voiceless and nameless, and the horrible thing that happened is even called a "requirement" by the government. The second half of the book is about a modern Palestinian woman who tries to find this "minor detail" of history, but she ends up disappearing herself. The novel's silences, repetitions, and erasures force readers to face things that cannot be shown directly. In

contrast, Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* envisions the abrupt disappearance of all Palestinians from Israel overnight. The novel shows this absence not through the trauma of one person, but through the disappearance of many people. The novelist focuses on how Israeli characters react to a society that has lost its native population. Shibli's novel incorporates haunting into the narrative structure, while Azem actualizes haunting as a thought experiment, illustrating how absence disrupts the oppressor's perception of normalcy.

The significance of reading these texts together lies in how they theorize absence as testimony. Both novels suggest that disappearance is not a mere void but an insistent presence that refuses erasure. In doing so, they highlight what Derrida (1994) terms the specter, that which persists even when denied. Gordon's (2008) account of haunting as "what's been concealed yet very much alive" provides another lens: haunting is not a metaphor but a social reality. Felman and Laub's (1992) reflections on testimony as an act of bearing witness to the unspeakable, along with Caruth's (1996) concept of trauma as an "unclaimed experience," clarify how these texts stage trauma indirectly, through absence. Finally, Butler's (2009) work on grievability illuminates how Palestinian lives are excluded from recognition, while Said's (1993) notion of counter-memory underscores the political urgency of these spectral testimonies.

Existing scholarship has begun to address these dynamics, though often in relation to one text at a time. Critics, such as Nashef (2022), have examined the suppression of voice in Shibli, cautioning that it risks repeating the violence of erasure, while others, like Elbaz (2023), highlight how Shibli foregrounds the “unarchivable,” insisting on minor details as a resistant testimony. Scholarship on Azem’s novel has emphasized its speculative nature and political critique, with particular attention to how disappearance dramatizes denial in Israeli society. Khaleel, (2024) argued that *The Book of Disappearance* disrupts dominant historiography by transforming absence into testimony, compelling readers to reflect on the ethical stakes of disappearance. However, few studies have placed these two works in dialogue, despite their shared reliance on absence as a narrative method.

The research problem, then, is not only how Palestinian literature represents violence and erasure but how it mobilizes absence itself as a strategy of witness. In contexts where archives silence, where voices are suppressed, and where disappearance is systemic, literature assumes the function of a counter-archive. Rather than offering closure, both novels expose the ongoing nature of dispossession. As Caruth (1996) observes, trauma resists assimilation into narrative, returning belatedly to unsettle the present. Likewise, the absence in these novels does not end with silence; it persists, pressing upon readers as a demand to witness.

This study aims to examine how *Minor Detail* and *The Book of Disappearance* construct what I call spectral testimony: a form of witnessing that emerges not through direct survivor accounts but through silence, absence, and haunting. By applying a unified theoretical framework drawn from Derrida, Gordon, Felman and Laub, Caruth, Butler, and Said, the analysis situates these novels within a broader discourse of testimony while foregrounding their distinct Palestinian poetics. The methodology employed is close textual analysis, attentive to narrative form, repetition, gaps, and intertextual resonances, in order to demonstrate how absence functions as testimony.

Ultimately, this article argues that Shibli and Azem develop a shared aesthetics of haunting that transforms absence into presence and silence into testimony. Their novels serve as counter-archives, unsettling official historiography and compelling readers to assume the role of secondary witnesses. By bringing these texts into dialogue, the study contributes to scholarship on Palestinian literature, on testimony studies, and on postcolonial hauntology, while also highlighting the ethical and political stakes of narrating what settler-colonial frameworks attempt to erase.

Theoretical Framework

When talking about violence in situations of dispossession and occupation, the issue of testimony always comes up. In traditional definitions,

testimony presupposes the existence of a voice, a survivor articulating their experience to provide evidence. In the history of Palestine, where massacres are silenced, archives erased, and victims systematically denied a voice, literature frequently grapples with the insurmountable challenge of testifying without witnesses and preserving memory in the absence of words. This study examines Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* and Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* through a framework that interprets absence as testimony, silence as voice, and haunting as narrative technique. The theoretical framework is informed by various scholars—Jacques Derrida, Avery Gordon, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth, Judith Butler, and Edward Said—whose contributions collectively allow us to conceptualize literature not merely as a reiteration of direct speech but as a domain where spectral traces necessitate acknowledgment. The concept that unifies these diverse approaches is spectral testimony, which designates a mode of bearing witness that occurs not through the presence of voice but through the persistence of absence.

Central to this framework is the recognition that absence is not equivalent to nothingness. In Derrida's analysis, the specter embodies a paradoxical temporality: it is neither present nor absent, neither living nor dead, but insists across time, unsettling boundaries of chronology and identity. This formulation captures precisely the status of the Bedouin girl in *Minor Detail*, who is denied name and speech yet remains the structuring absence of the text, as well as the

Palestinians in *The Book of Disappearance*, whose collective vanishing destabilizes Israeli life by insisting through their absence. The novels dramatize what Derrida identifies that the excluded do not disappear but persist as haunting forces. Absence, in this sense, testifies by insisting. This insistence of the erased is not only a philosophical paradox but also a social reality, and here Gordon's reflections on haunting extend Derrida's insights into the realm of lived experience. For Gordon, haunting is "not a metaphor for absence or death but a social experience of what has been buried or ignored yet continues to affect the living" (2008, p. xvi). To encounter haunting is to confront what structures have attempted to repress but have failed to eliminate. In Shibli's novel, the silences surrounding the girl—the refusal to grant her interiority or speech—do not produce emptiness but instead trouble the very form of the narration. The clinical, report-like prose becomes unsettling precisely because it seems incapable of containing the violence it seeks to normalize. In Azem's novel, the sudden disappearance of Palestinians dramatizes haunting on a collective scale, as Israeli characters attempt to carry on daily routines only to find absence everywhere: in hospitals, in kitchens, and in neighbourhoods suddenly emptied of neighbours. Haunting, as Gordon insists, is "the something-to-be-done," a pressure on the present that refuses to let the past be forgotten. Both novels show how Palestinian absence is not absence at all but a haunting that demands acknowledgment. If haunting provides the vocabulary

for absence, testimony provides the framework for understanding how absence might speak. Felman and Laub (1992) argue that testimony is not reducible to factual recounting; it is an act of witnessing that acknowledges the crisis of representation. Testimony always presupposes another, a listener who receives what cannot be fully expressed. This relational structure is radicalized in Shibli and Azem, for here the speaker is entirely absent. In *Minor Detail*, the victim has no voice, and the contemporary narrator disappears before she can finish her account. In *The Book of Disappearance*, an entire people vanish overnight. The absence of a speaker compels the reader into the role of listener, reconfiguring testimony as a demand placed on those who read. These novels dramatize the impossibility at the heart of testimony that it often involves bearing witness where no one can speak. By refusing to offer direct testimony, they enact testimony in spectral form, obliging us to hear silence as witness.

The temporality of trauma further clarifies this spectral mode of testimony. Caruth (1996) describes trauma as an “unclaimed experience,” an event not fully grasped in the moment and therefore returning belatedly to unsettle the present. Trauma does not conform to narrative closure; it returns compulsively, often against the will of the subject. This is precisely what Shibli stages when her contemporary narrator becomes obsessed with a “minor detail” in an old newspaper report, rereading the same lines compulsively, as though the event demanded endless repetition. The act of rereading performs trauma’s

structure: an event that cannot be assimilated returns belatedly in the form of obsession. Azem stages trauma differently, by presenting disappearance not as a past event but as a present rupture whose shock reverberates through those who remain. Israelis wake to a world emptied of Palestinians, compelled to confront suddenly what they had denied: that their existence was structured by the very people they sought to erase. In both novels, trauma is not directly narrated but enacted through haunting repetition, absence, and belated return.

The stakes of such haunting are not only psychological but political. Butler's work on grievability demonstrates how states and dominant discourses frame some lives as worthy of mourning while rendering others invisible. "There are those whose lives are considered unworthy of grief," she observes, "and so they do not count as lives in the full sense" (2009, p. 15). The Bedouin girl in *Minor Detail* is treated as disposable, her life reduced to routine military language, while in Azem's speculative fiction, Palestinians as a people are imagined as having disappeared without consequence, as though their erasure could be borne by the state without disruption. Both novels challenge this ungrievability by insisting on haunting as a counter-politics of mourning. They reveal the violence of erasure and demand recognition of those excluded from public grief.

Finally, these strategies can be understood as forms of counter-memory.

Said (1993) insists that culture under colonialism often functions as an intervention in dominant historiography, preserving what official archives suppress. Counter-memory resists erasure by offering alternative ways of remembering. What is distinctive about Shibli and Azem, however, is that their counter-memory is not constituted by recovered voices or preserved archives but by absence itself. They preserve disappearance as testimony, making haunting the very substance of counter-memory. Literature becomes the archive of what cannot be archived, the repository of what has been erased. By drawing on these overlapping perspectives, this study constructs a framework of spectral testimony that accounts for how absence, silence, and disappearance function in Palestinian literature. Derrida and Gordon shed light on the enduring nature of haunting; Felman, Laub, and Caruth elucidate the crisis of testimony and the temporality of trauma; Butler reveals the politics of grievability; and Said contextualizes Palestinian literature within the framework of cultural resistance. These perspectives allow for an interpretation of Shibli and Azem as novelists who transmute absence into presence, silence into voice, and disappearance into witness. Their works force readers to face the unresolved, accept the ungrievable, and remember what mainstream history denies. The theoretical framework elucidates the strategies of these texts while situating them within a broader discourse of postcolonial haunting and testimony, emphasizing how

Palestinian literature resists erasure by compelling the absent to assert their presence.

Absence as Testimony in Minor Detail and The Book of Disappearance

The spectral logic of testimony finds one of its most unsettling expressions in *Minor Detail*, a novel that refuses to offer the consolations of voice or empathy and instead subjects its readers to the cold rhythms of bureaucratic violence. The first half of the text, set in 1949, records the actions of Israeli soldiers in the Negev desert with a style so detached that atrocity becomes indistinguishable from procedure. The opening lines establish this tone, “The commander examined the map. He marked the new point with a pencil and gave orders to head there immediately” (Shibli, 2020, p. 7). The matter-of-fact tone exemplifies how violence is framed as cartographic adjustment, merely “marking” on a piece of paper. Human presence—whether the soldiers themselves or the Bedouin inhabitants—is reduced to logistics, to coordinates on a map. This reduction intensifies as the narrative introduces the Bedouin girl who is captured by the soldiers. Her subjectivity is evacuated almost entirely, “The girl was tied to one of the tent poles. She did not resist, but her breathing was shallow, and her eyes remained open, staring at nothing” (p. 39). Here, the body is described only in physiological fragments—breathing, eyes, resistance—and even these are negated or diminished. She is not given

voice, name, or interiority. Later, when the assault occurs, Shibli's prose collapses into chilling euphemism: "The soldier entered and did what was required" (p. 46). The word "required" transforms rape into a duty, stripping the act of its violence by presenting it as military necessity. Butler's notion of grievability illuminates this rhetorical violence, the girl is not recognized as a life that can be lost but as a disposable object, processed through language that refuses mourning.

Even seemingly neutral descriptions carry the weight of erasure. At one point, Shibli notes simply, "He placed the girl's body in the sand and covered it carefully, as though it were a routine matter" (p. 52). Burial here is not ritual but disposal, not a site of grief but another task in a chain of command. Derrida's concept of the specter clarifies the paradox: although she is erased, her absence insists, "there without being there" (1994, p. 124). The Bedouin girl becomes the structuring absence of the novel, a ghostly figure who organizes the entire narrative without ever being given speech.

The second half of the novel relocates this haunting into the present, following a Palestinian woman who becomes obsessed with the 1949 murder after reading a short article. She confesses, "I kept rereading the article, my eyes returning to the same lines, circling the same minor detail" (Shibli, 2020, p. 59). The language of "circling" and "minor detail" embodies trauma's temporality,

which Caruth defines as a belated return of what could not be assimilated in the moment. The narrator's obsession is not a rational investigation but a compulsion to repeat, an enactment of trauma's endless return.

Her attempt to retrace the event is obstructed at every stage by bureaucratic violence. She notes, "I had to get a permit, borrow an ID card, and find out which roads were open. Every time I thought I had solved one problem, another presented itself" (p. 64). The repetition of obstacles mirrors the repetition of trauma: violence does not end but proliferates through administrative structures. The identity card becomes emblematic, "Nothing would prevent me from entering—except, of course, my identity card" (p. 65). What should enable recognition becomes instead the mark of exclusion. The card, like Derrida's trace, bears absence within presence: it identifies by negating, by announcing in advance that the bearer is erased from belonging.

This logic extends to her visit to a military museum. She observes: "The silence of the rooms was deafening, as if the objects themselves conspired to hide their history" (p. 72). The curated displays offer an archive of conquest but no testimony of the conquered. Diana Taylor's distinction between archive and repertoire clarifies this moment: the museum preserves artifacts but erases the embodied memory of those who suffered under them. Yet the silence of the objects, as the narrator suggests, testifies indirectly, pressing against the official

narrative. The museum becomes a haunted space, where absence insists more forcefully than presence. Even sensory impressions acquire spectral weight. The narrator remarks: "The smell of the desert clung to me, sharp and dry, as though it were trying to remind me of something" (Shibli, 2020, p. 83). Smell, unlike text or artifact, cannot be fully contained; it lingers, it insists, and it haunts. Elbaz (2023) describes such elements in Shibli's writing as the unarchivable, details that escape capture but remain insistent. When the narrator concludes that "There are some who consider this way of seeing—focusing intently on the most minor details—as the only way to arrive at the truth" (p. 89), she articulates the novel's epistemology— that truth survives not in grand narratives but in spectral fragments, in details that refuse erasure.

The novel ends with the narrator's disappearance, her voice simply cut off. The effect is abrupt and unsettling, testimony is withheld at the very moment it seems closest. As Shibli writes in the novel's final scene, "The sound of the water pump was the last thing I heard, then everything went blank" (p. 96). The blankness is not an absence of meaning but its most powerful form. Felman and Laub argue that testimony requires a listener, but Shibli erases the speaker entirely, compelling the reader to become the listener to silence. Weizman (2017) might call the narrator's disappearance "forensic absence," which means that it is a proof that something has disappeared. Butler's

examination of grievability is pertinent here_ a life that is excluded from mourning demands to be grieved through haunting.

In this way, *Minor Detail* enacts a poetics of spectral testimony. Through its clinical narration of atrocity, its catalog of bureaucratic obstructions, its sensory fragments, and its abrupt silencing of the narrator, the novel forces readers to inhabit absence as presence. The Bedouin girl's erased life haunts the text; the contemporary narrator's vanishing obliges the reader to bear witness. Shibli thus transforms literature into a counter-archive, one that preserves not documents but erasures, and one that insists that absence itself can testify.

Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* begins from a startling conceit, the sudden vanishing of every Palestinian from Israel. Unlike Shibli's *Minor Detail*, which confines absence to the silenced figure of one Bedouin girl and the vanishing of a narrator, Azem extends disappearance to the scale of a people. The novel unfolds through two intertwined voices: Alaa, a Palestinian journalist, who records his reflections and family memories in notebooks, and Ariel, his Israeli neighbour, who, after Alaa's disappearance, becomes the unwilling reader of these notebooks. The shift from Palestinian to Israeli perspective dramatizes how absence functions not only as loss but also as haunting, forcing the colonizer to confront what he has erased. This premise literalizes the politics of erasure that has defined Palestinian history, what was

always denied discursively is staged as literal disappearance, exposing absence as testimony.

From the opening pages, Azem anchors haunting in intergenerational memory. Alaa recalls his grandmother's testimony of the Nakba: "She always said that the houses remembered, that the trees leaned toward the people who were forced to leave them. Sometimes, she insisted, the walls themselves wept" (Azem, 2014, p. 21). The imagery shifts the site of testimony from human voice to environment. Houses and trees become witnesses, while walls are personified as mourners. This passage enacts what Derrida (1994) describes as the insistence of the specter—the past refuses erasure, returning in unexpected forms. For Palestinians, testimony survives not only in archives or personal accounts but also in material spaces—landscapes, ruins, and architecture—that absorb and repeat what has been silenced. As Gordon (2008) argues, haunting is not metaphorical absence but a social reality that presses on the present. The grandmother's conviction that houses and trees "remember" exemplifies how landscapes become haunted archives, preserving what official histories attempt to erase. When the disappearance occurs, silence itself becomes overwhelming. Ariel remarks, "The streets were quieter than they had ever been, but the quiet was not peace; it was a kind of deafening void" (Azem, 2014, p. 68). The oxymoronic phrase "deafening void" captures how silence becomes unbearable testimony. It recalls Butler's (2009) analysis of grievability, where lives

excluded from recognition return as haunting presences. Palestinians, imagined by the Israeli state as dispensable, prove indispensable in their absence; they maintained the pulse of daily life, and without them, silence itself indicts denial. The void is not empty; it testifies to what has been erased, producing unease instead of relief. The novel dramatizes this further in its depiction of hospitals. Ariel describes entering wards: “The beds were empty, the monitors flatlined, and for the first time I realized that every beat of this place had relied on people who were no longer here” (Azem, 2014, p. 91). What had been unseen in life—Palestinians as doctors, nurses, and cleaners—becomes undeniable in disappearance. The emptiness of beds and silence of machines function as what Gordon calls “the something-to-be-done” (2008, p. xvi). Haunting exposes social dependence on those erased, demanding acknowledgment. Absence reveals presence by destabilizing the structures that relied on invisibility. The hospital scene exemplifies Azem’s strategy of transforming disappearance into spectral testimony, where what is no longer there insists on being recognized.

A crucial dimension of the novel is the way Alaa’s notebooks transfer testimony beyond disappearance. Ariel admits, “His words unsettled me, as though he were still here, speaking from the pages, demanding that I respond” (Azem, 2014, p. 134). Here testimony does not die with the witness; it persists in writing, forcing even the oppressor to listen. Felman and Laub (1992) argue that testimony requires an addressee, a listener who bears the burden of what

cannot be spoken fully. In Azem's novel, Ariel becomes that listener against his will. The diaries function as spectral testimony, obliging the colonizer to confront voices he had previously ignored. The very act of reading destabilizes his self-perception, illustrating how testimony can outlive disappearance and haunt those who sought to silence it. Azem also dramatizes trauma as belated recognition. Ariel reflects, "Only when the cafés stayed closed, when the buses did not run, when the trash piled up in the streets, did I realize that we had vanished them in our minds long before they vanished in reality" (Azem, 2014, p. 156). The sentence acknowledges discursive erasure_ Palestinians were made absent long before their physical vanishing. Caruth's (1996) understanding of trauma as an "unclaimed experience" resonates here. The disappearance functions as a return of what had been denied, compelling recognition belatedly and violently. Ariel's shock exposes the structure of trauma: what was refused at one level comes back at another, demanding confrontation. One of the most evocative moments occurs in Alaa's letters, where he describes the city of Jaffa, "All the Jaffans who stayed here see a shadow walking next to them when they walk through the old city" (Azem, 2014, p. 66). The shadow becomes a figure of spectral persistence, haunting the present with the traces of the displaced. It literalizes Derrida's specter, "there without being there" (1994, p. 124). Khaleel et al. (2020) highlight this quality, arguing that Azem deploys magical realism to render disappearance as both uncanny and politically charged, creating a

“politics of haunting in which absence becomes testimony louder than speech” (p. 229). By employing the language of shadows, tears, and silence, the novel converts magical realism into a tool of counter-memory, unsettling colonial historiography by presenting erasure itself as a form of testimony.

The novel closes with Ariel’s recognition of haunting, “Their absence followed me everywhere, like a shadow I could not escape. Every corner of the city seemed to whisper their names, though no one spoke them aloud” (Azem, 2014, p. 201). Ariel becomes haunted not by what Palestinians said but by what they left behind_ their silence, their shadows, and their absence as presence. In this final vision, Azem compels readers to recognize that disappearance does not erase but magnifies memory. Testimony survives in spectral form, forcing itself upon those who tried to refuse it.

Conclusion

Adania Shibli’s *Minor Detail* and Ibtisam Azem’s *The Book of Disappearance* confront the limits of testimony in the aftermath of erasure. Where conventional testimony relies on survivors who speak, these novels dramatize contexts where voice is denied and survival itself is erased. In response, both authors reimagine testimony as spectral, moving it from speech to haunting, from presence to absence, and from voice to silence. Their works force readers to enter a haunted space where the traces of the missing become

the most powerful form of witness. The novels vary in approach and extent. Shibli uses a harsh realism that focuses on one event, a "minor detail," whose repetition makes it hard to close the history. In contrast, Azem uses magical realism to show how an entire group of people could disappear, which makes everyone in society realize how dependent and in denial they are. Nonetheless, despite these disparities, both narratives converge in illustrating how absence itself serves as testimony. Every novel turns haunting into a moral obligation, requiring both characters and readers to act as secondary witnesses. This coming together shows what could be called a Palestinian poetics of spectral testimony. In a situation where archives are broken up, memories are silenced, and lives are made ungrievable, literature takes on the task of keeping what is denied. By presenting absence as presence and silence as voice, Shibli and Azem construct counter-archives that challenge official historiography and oppose colonial erasure. Their works assert that what has been forcibly displaced persists in demanding acknowledgment, and that haunting transcends metaphor to represent a tangible social phenomenon.

In the end, *Minor Detail* and *The Book of Disappearance* show that testimony can last without speech. Through haunting, memory endures erasure; through absence, presence asserts itself; and through silence, voice endures. These novels provide both literary innovation and political intervention, illustrating that Palestinian literature retains the remnants of the erased as

testimony more potent than words. By doing this, they show how literature can be both an ethical archive and a place of resistance, making sure that what settler-colonial frameworks want to erase keeps coming back as a demand for recognition.

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