

Thanatopolitics and the Constant Smallness of Being: Necropower and *Bare Life* in Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

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ABSTRACT

*Foucault and Agamben cogently argue that modern democracies continue to perpetuate violence and systematise the exclusion of the marginalised beings through entrenched ulterior motives and power dynamics, generally seen through thanatopolitics. Thanatopolitics, a term commonly used to refer to the exercise of power, determines whose lives are preserved and whose are rendered disposable. Such perpetuation of dehumanisation can often be seen in contemporary fiction. By taking Palestinian fiction, *Mornings in Jenin*, as an example, this paper examines the interplay between necropower, biopower, surveillance, and the state of exception in shaping the politics of the body. Specifically, this paper examines how the body becomes a central site of control, resistance, memory, and erasure under conditions of prolonged occupation and militarised governance. Through a close reading concerning strategies of disempowerment, stories about concentration camps, refugees, and above all, the living dead are first presented. Secondly, this paper analyses the lived experiences of Palestinians grappling with the unending, wide-range violence, evoking minutiae of harsh realities under emergency through the description of Palestinians' wounded and mutilated bodies. Finally, this paper discloses the many ways in which the Palestinian struggle against dispossession and displacement is humanised, sparking meaningful conversations about the Palestinian culture of resistance against de(atrophy), a sense of decay, a loss of function, or a reduction of the significance of the Palestinian people. By centralising the body within necthanatopolitical discourses, this paper offers a stark contrast against available postcolonial inquiries, presenting new insights into literary strategies deployed to reclaim agency amidst systemic death-worlds.*

Keywords: dehumanisation; Mornings in Jenin; Palestinian fiction; state power; thanatopolitics

INTRODUCTION

By using the Palestinian novel, *Mornings in Jenin*, as an example, this paper analyses how necropower, biopower, surveillance, and the state of exception intersect to shape the politics of the body. Through an analysis of various interpretations of power, this paper explores how prevailing development paradigms obscure the persistent reality of Israeli settler colonialism. As we shall see later, this is mainly done by dehistoricising Zionism and its associated project, integrating the mechanisms of Israeli occupation into the formal Palestinian development strategy, and endorsing an economic viewpoint that perceives development as an objective and impartial process functioning independently of power dynamics. A harbinger to this investigation might, therefore, be necessary. The Palestine-Israel conflict has caused 69,000 casualties, with displacements of 1.5 million people after October 7, 2023 (Leclint, 2025). The plight of Palestine is deeply embedded in a historical international context that can be traced back to several significant events, including the 1897 Zionist conference held in Basle, Switzerland, the United States's involvement in World War I in 1916, which enabled Britain to receive the mandate for Palestine, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and potentially even a literary milestone that preceded these occurrences, motivating the publication of George Eliot's 1876 novel, *Daniel Deronda*. Since the founding of Israel in 1948,

the narrative surrounding Palestine has been marked by a series of tragedies, including massacres, land seizures, dispossession, forced deportations, and targeted assassinations. Bearing these premises in mind, this paper illustrates how bodies in *Mornings in Jenin* become a central site of control, resistance, memory, and erasure under conditions of prolonged occupation and militarised governance.

THE PRODUCTION OF BIOPOLITICAL BODY, MODES OF THANATOPOLITICS AND *MORNINGS IN JENIN*

Various hues and shades of meaning of biopolitical dimensions are relevant to thanatopolitics. First, necropolitical discourse examines the complex interplay and global implications of neo-imperialism. Second, neoliberal governance generally has a profoundly adverse impact on the socio-economic and political conditions of colonial nations (Nasir, M. A. 2017). Third, while Foucault's biopolitics emphasises life, Mbembé's necropolitics distinctly centres on death and devastation. Finally, within these modern warfare scenarios, Butler contemplates the viability of life and the mournability of death (Butler, 2009). Thanatopolitics, however, questions the concepts of biopolitics. It is through thanatopolitics that prioritises the ethos of 'making live' while overlooking the associated power of 'letting die' (Murray, 2006). Agamben (1998) characterises thanatopolitics as a governance of death, focusing on the criteria that lead to the determination of a life deemed unworthy of continuation. For example, the transition from internment facilities on Greek islands to the so-called refugee camps in Libya exemplifies a condition of exception, wherein the lives of migrants are diminished to what Agamben describes as bare life. This concept serves as a dispositive aimed at regulating death through various power dynamics and technologies. It is at these junctures that the individual facing death is transformed into the homo sacer, thus becoming subject to the decision of whether to be 'made to live or let die,' ultimately leading to the possibility of being killed without consequence. By examining thanatopolitics, one can gain insights into the mechanisms, technologies, and interventions that accompany the process of dying, encouraging substantial scrutiny to understand how, when, where, and why individuals lose their political existence (Theule et al., 2020).

Through the employment of thanatopolitics as a lens in *Mornings in Jenin*, dimensions of death and mortality can be presented, especially when examined through Susan Abulhawa's depictions of marginalised Palestinian communities, who challenge biopolitical systems. The text calls for an acknowledgement of the regimes that enforce death on specific groups to preserve life for others, urging a thoughtful consideration of the political ramifications surrounding those overlooked deaths. It is through these images that Abulhawa uses to explore the darkest crevices of life, conflict, and horrendous injustices, shedding light on hidden worlds. By expanding on the boundaries of both individual and collective Palestinian identity, Abulhawa creatively plaits a profound sense of alienation from representational frameworks, which challenges the core redemptive purpose of postcolonial literature (Norbasudi & Rosman, 2025). Abulhawa, seen in one way, immerses the reader in a disorienting state of stark estrangement, thereby emphasising the conflicts between empathy and the moral implications of representation. In this manner, her fiction, among many others, becomes a performance of a Palestinian identity that has been stripped away by the mechanisms of postmemory, alongside the ongoing erasure stemming from a persistent state of coloniality and contemporary injustices (Ahmed & Hashim, 2015). By focusing on *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa's fiction heralds a new chapter in Palestinian literature,

characterised by a resilient sensibility, marked by profound fragmentation, futility, and a sense of melancholic despair.

Building upon Foucault's exploration of biopolitics, Agamben (1998) argues that the sovereign holds ultimate authority over life and death. The ancient Greeks differentiated between two concepts of life: *zoē* and *bios*. *Bios* refers to an individual's autonomous legal identity, which is intricately linked to their ability to communicate and be acknowledged as a participant in the political sphere. In contrast, *zoē* signifies mere biological existence, characterised solely by physical attributes (Agamben, 1998). While contemporary discourse may have blurred the lines between *bare life* and political life, *zoē* continues to be intertwined with political considerations, manifesting as an exception. This entity is included only through its exclusion (Agamben, 1998, p. 11). Thus, it is the sovereign who determines what constitutes this 'exception.' Those who fall outside the protections of the law are rendered devoid of their *bios*, effectively extinguishing their political existence. The figure of homo sacer exemplifies the concept of reduction to mere existence; this individual, both cursed and revered, exists outside the boundaries of the law and is defined as one who "may be killed and not yet killed" (Agamben, 1998, p. 8).

THE DICHOTOMY OF LIFE AND DEATH IN PALESTINIAN LITERATURE

In (1957), Al-Asad discusses the literary developments in Palestine from the late 19th century to the late 1950s. The letters of Al-Sakakini and the poems of Priest Elias Marmura of Nazareth are equally significant within Palestinian literature. In 1910, Palestinian poet Isaf al-Nashash highlighted the threats Palestine was facing due to imperialistic ambitions. Yaghl (1912) categorises the evolution of Palestinian literature into four distinct periods. The first period spans from the mid-19th century until 1908, characterised by the traditional style. The second period, from 1908 to 1920, witnessed the crystallisation of Arab national identity, with the concept of homeland emerging as a significant political force. The third period, spanning from 1920 to 1940, witnessed the emergence of a distinct Palestinian identity, which became the primary driving force in the lives of the Arab population in Palestine and significantly influenced the majority of Palestinian literary works. The fourth period was defined by the anxious anticipation surrounding the outcomes of the Second World War, the ensuing conflict, and the subsequent catastrophe known as al-Nakba in 1948.

Al-Asad (1957) suggests an alternative classification, identifying three distinct phases in the evolution of Palestinian literature. These are 1) the era preceding the *nahda* or awakening, 2) the transitional phase, and 3) the *nahda* itself, which was a renaissance, aimed at reviving Arabic literature and identity. The first one is based on traditional Syrian, Lebanese and Egyptian Arabic literature, which already has its *nahda*. The Second phase comprises broadening the exposure of Palestinian youth to Western and world literature, increasing printing facilities, and establishing literary associations. The third period is one of flourishing, which begins after World War II. However, Al-Asir (1944) highlighted the relative obscurity of Palestinian literature within the Arab world, despite its varied contributions. He criticised the Beirut literary journal al-Adib for neglecting the significant active Palestinian poets in the Arab East. "A Quick Glance at the Writers in Palestine" extends the list, highlighting several poets whose works gained traction, including Al Hout, Bseiso, Al Karmi (Abu Salma), Zaqtan, and Rashid. The poetry from the 1940s and 1950s reflects the Palestinian exodus and expresses disillusionment with both Arab governments and the concept of international justice.

Jayyusi agrees with al-Asad, noting that Palestinian poets from the 1930s and 1940s set themselves apart well before the al-Iltizam (commitment) movement gained traction among Arab intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s. The notable Palestinian poets of this era included Mahmoud (1913-1948), Abu-Salma (1911-1984), and Tuqan (1985) (1905-1941). Jayyusi (1987) observes that Tuqan is the only artist of his time who has elevated the artistic standards of Palestinian poetry. His poems exhibit an unparalleled broad appeal and adaptability, attributed to his skilful integration of satire, sarcasm, patriotism, and personal reflection (Moore, 2021). The literary scene in the West Bank and Gaza flourished following the 1967 War, receiving significant recognition. Alongside Habbiby, authors such as Nafa, Taha, and Fayyad also emerged in Israel. The inseparable connection between the individual and the land is a prevalent theme in Palestinian literature, frequently representing notions of belonging, community, heritage, and ownership claims, as well as resistance to erasure and colonial dispossession (Nashef, H.A. 2024). Adam Robert, in his work *Science Fiction* (2000), perceives the speculative genre as a tool for writers such as Saleem Haddad, Majd Kayyal, and Emad El-Din Aysha to challenge and dismantle the negative portrayals and stereotypes associated with native Palestinians that are prevalent in Western mainstream literature and media (pp. 29-30) (Norbasudi & Rosman, 2025). Shibli's narratives illustrate the disjointed self against a broken landscape, where the self's struggle to integrate with a broader collective mirrors a geography marked by obstacles and hindrances.

Due to the expropriation of Palestinian land by Israel, Palestinians residing within Israel have become refugees in their own homeland. The speaker notably reflects on his peasant heritage, emphasising that the legal ownership of the land appears insignificant, as the people have always had a rightful connection to it. Darwish's external experiences of dispossession address the more intricate dimensions of the colonial endeavour that restrict and oppress the Palestinian people. The resistance poetry of Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, which predates the rise of narrative due to the directness and immediacy of the poetic form, represents the initial expression of Palestinian life and death.

Tuqan's poem, composed in honour of the three individuals sentenced to death in 1929 for their involvement in the tumultuous events of that year, stands as one of the most significant works in the realm of Palestinian resistance poetry (*The Red Tuesday*). Despite the varied personal experiences, educational backgrounds, and contexts from which Palestinian writers articulate their identities, they all utilise Arabic. The Palestinian writer's commitment to the Arabic language and the ongoing effort to master it have served as a unifying element within Palestine and across the Arab world. Nevertheless, while Arabic boasts a rich tradition and history, Said (1986) notes that Arabic remains unfamiliar mainly in the West, leading to its misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Palestinian writers, shaped by their historical and cultural contexts, have endeavoured to reconstruct narratives, correct misconceptions, and reclaim their homeland. Bearing these premises in mind, *Mornings in Jenin* is used as an example to analyse how necropower, biopower, surveillance, and the state of exception intersect to shape the politics of the body.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The current research employs a critical examination of *Mornings in Jenin* as a primary text. The content of the texts is scrutinised through a thematic categorisation structured by selecting specific subjects from neocolonial and settler-colonial theory. The present study employs the qualitative analysis methodology described by Miles et al. (2020) to explore thematic patterns in Palestinian fiction. This is done in this paper, as they suggest, through three interrelated and cyclical phases: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and 3) conclusion-drawing and verification, processes which are incorporated with the notion of thanatopolitics. That is, rather than promoting transitions between elements and encouraging the development of new meanings, thanatopolitics associates the notion of living death with governance. This association does not arise from the exercise of personal autonomy, but rather by confining life within strict limitations. The individual body is extracted from its uniqueness, detached from its sphere of mortality, and equated with the apparatuses of government.

Within the framework of living death, this signifies a political discourse regarding life and death that diverges from the promotion of a standard and moves towards a 'norm of life,' an ecological paradigm where the standard reflects the intrinsic impulse of life amidst death (Esposito, 2008, p. 194). The linkage of bodies to domains of death suggests that individual existence increasingly resists productive exploitation by institutional powers. This occurrence can be characterised as necropolitics, which separates life and death from their thanatopolitical underpinnings. Agamben defines thanatopolitics as a governance concerning death, emphasising the criteria that determine which lives are considered unworthy of preservation. This notion functions as a dispositive intended to regulate death through various power dynamics and technologies. It is at these critical points that the individual confronting death is transformed into the homo sacer, thereby becoming subject to the decision of whether to be 'made to live or allowed to die,' ultimately resulting in the potential for being killed without repercussions. By exploring thanatopolitics, the understanding of the mechanisms, technologies, and interventions associated with the dying process provides a more profound insight into how, when, where, and why individuals lose their political existence (Theule et al., 2020). In their study of geriatric end-of-life wards, Theule et al. (2020) found that thanatopolitical practices in hospitals predominantly focus on bare life, which either lacks or has relinquished its political relevance, reducing the patient to mere physiological metrics that determine the acknowledgement of life. Consequently, the body is viewed as simply a collection of organs (Sheppard, 2023).

As Figure 1 shows, Thanatopolitics is fundamentally rooted in the idea of mutilation, which entails the incorporation of the body into the state as a core component of governance. The mutilated body symbolises a manifestation of pre-existing violence, where the concept of living death can only be comprehended through the perspective of institutional authority. This process of subjectification, marked by the mechanised domination of life by thanatopolitical forces, is enabled by the official appropriation of death, making thanatopolitics inherently destructive in its ability to establish a state of killability. Therefore, this paper is guided by the following key question: How does the sovereignty and democracy of Israel in Palestinian literary discourse describe the evils of necropolitics and thanatopolitics?

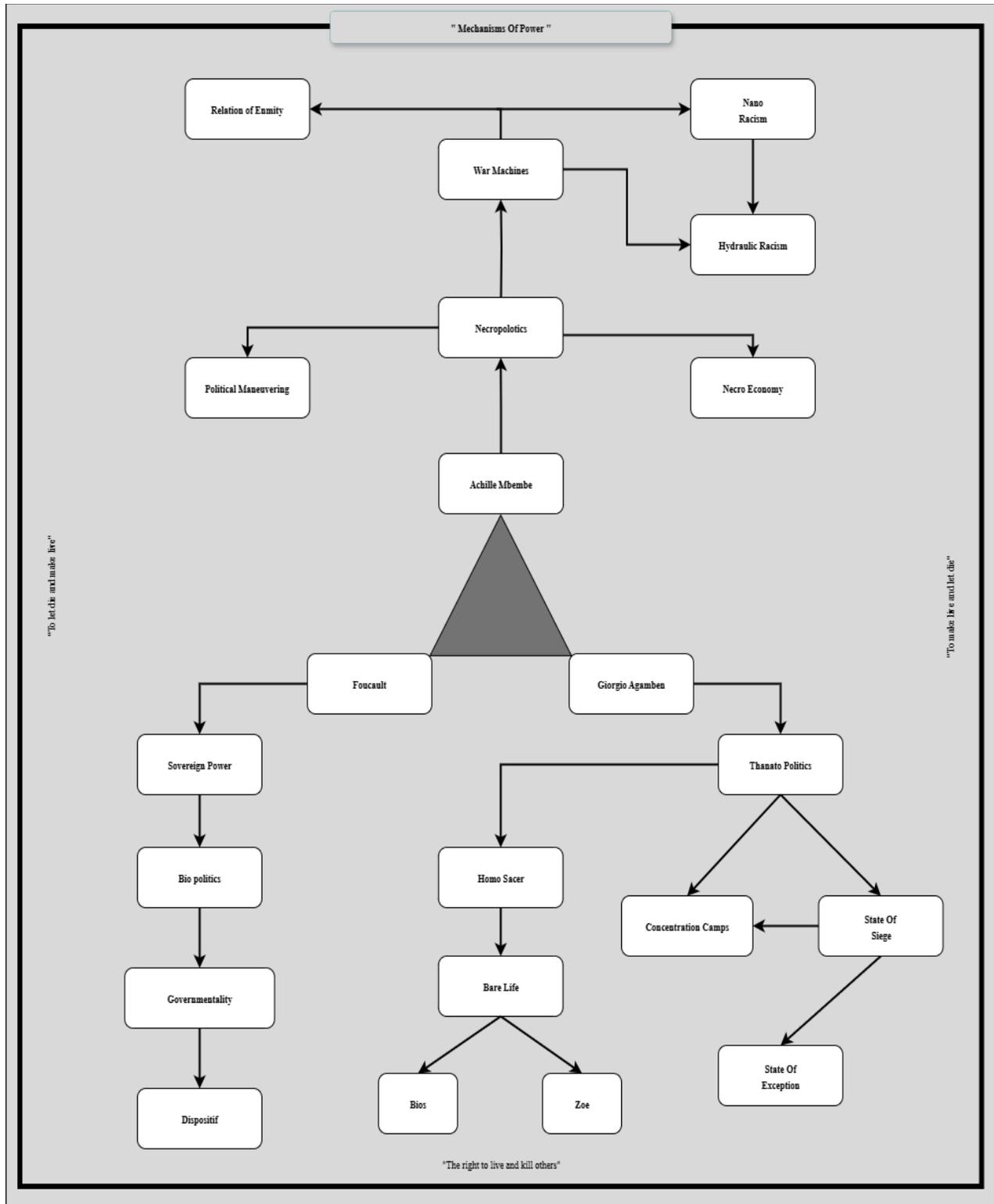


FIGURE 1. Mechanisms of Power (Theoretical Connections of Study)

THE WEAPONIZATION OF LIFE IN ABULHAWA'S PALESTINE

The topology of power found in Abulhawa's fiction laments the destruction wrought by the British on Palestinian society for so many generations. The detailed examination of Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* with reference to the theory of thanatopolitics reveals the resilience of Palestinians while they were under systemic violence. The state tends to control and behold every moment, and even dead bodies are not spared. There is evidence in the narrative where, during collateral damage, disfigured bodies hung here and there, horrifying the whole community. The unwavering determination and defiance of the post-*Nakba* period resulted in what Aman (2021) refers to as a time of 'radical hope' and 'a new Palestinian subjectivity focused on the future,' one that acknowledged the irreversible changes to historic Palestine. This recent subjectivity refers to new forms of power and rule where the slogan of *no war, no peace* works simultaneously.

The emotional turmoil of being uprooted from one's homeland, experiencing dispossession and displacement, raises poignant questions about the devaluation of life when individuals are regarded as collateral damage. The tragedy of Palestine represents a shared failure of both Eastern and Western societies. The text refers to numerous deaths, but one of the most significant is that of Dalia. Dalia, who is defeating the pain of dispossession bound by her past, burdened by shock, shared wounds and loss, helps to redeem the crisis of the displaced community with a brave heart. When she finally (between the living and the dead) dies, Amal weeps on this loss and states: "I cried, not for this woman's death, but for my mother, who had departed that body years before...she was finally and completely rid of the whorehouse world that had deflowered her spirit" (p.127).

The supervision of life by external forces is a transparent sample of thanatopolitics in Abulhawa's fiction. When Palestinians became refugees to save their lives during bombardment, it became utterly impossible to go back to their native land. The death of olive trees shows the ramifications of colonial violence on uprooting the golden heritage. As Amal laments, "They cut down our trees as they cut down our lives," (p.111). This exemplifies the intertwined fate of land and indigenous peoples, highlighting the impact of political decisions on the very essence of existence. Individuals not only submit to governmental authority but also cultivate a fear of the government, which paralyses them and prevents any possibility of resistance or objection. In 1977, Foucault elaborated on the mechanisms of coercion imposed on citizens:

a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour...If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.

(Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

Likewise, the surveillance experienced by Amal is a result of an oppressive environment. She explains: "Every breath I take feels monitored, as if my very existence is a threat to the powers" (p. 87). Her feelings reflect her condition of being under scrutiny; her 24 hours are recorded by a fixed camera, making her life a mere spectacle of contestation, which ensures precariousness. The characters' transformation: "For the generations born in camps, grief found repose in a bed of necrophilia. Death came to resemble life and life, death" (p.108). Amal is a transparent example of the deadly consequences of war on victims who bear not one, but a diverse range of sufferings. However, despite facing all these calamities, resilience is the most striking quality of every character, including protagonist Amal. Amal's utterance, "I carry my scars as badges of honour; they remind me of my strength" (p. 112), denotes the transformation of her pain into

empowerment, making her an eternal symbol of survival, as she will be an unforgettable example of resilience after being left with nothing to lose.

In settler-colonial regimes, the body is redefined as a political entity and serves as a battleground for reshaping the power dynamics between the coloniser and the colonised. Butler (2009) provides insight into this redefinition of the body, particularly in the context of the Israeli military, which not only marginalises living Palestinians but also devalues the deaths of Palestinians, viewing them as insignificant and unworthy of mourning. Amal reveals how the collective existence of very few people can cause solace and a sense of belonging in an utterly cold world. Her description informs readers about the violent history of war, how inhumanisation and dehumanisation are exercised on human beings to occupy their lands and resources.

Amal unravels the horrors of war and uninformed bombing on refugees by explicating the bloodied hands of Abu Sameeh while he was finding his family under the rubble. She exhibits: “his family was buried alive...his face deformed with agony and his voice charged with despair...nothing more of life was left to live” (70). Israel's management of Palestinians' deaths and death rites, as discussed by Nashif (2015), is a component of the modern colonial occupation that implements biopolitical and necropolitical policing and surveillance over its subjects. The act of shooting at the checkpoint confirms B. Sahn's (2015) arguments on the human rights reports from the United Nations and non-governmental organisations in the absence of legal safeguards for the occupied Palestinian population, subjected to blatant, indiscriminate, and unpunished violence perpetrated by both Israeli civilians (settlers) and state representatives. “The bullet had struck my right side...tearing chunks of flesh from my belly upon exit” (p.119). Kevorkian draws a parallel between the ongoing infringement of human rights experienced under Israeli occupation and the restriction of Palestinians to enclaves in the West Bank, along with the besieged Gaza Strip, likening it to 'an extended concentration camp,' which reflects what Agamben refers to as *homo sacer*, or *bare life*.

The Sovereign decides who is placed in a *state of exception*, condemned to abandonment. Agamben contemplates that abandonment is epitomised in the figure of *homo sacer*. In general terms, *homo sacer* refers to "a human victim" who is ensnared by the sovereign ban, rendering them subject to killing without the act being considered a sacrifice (Agamben, 1998, p.53). In Amal's life, the order of power is structured in such a way that she is left alone in the camp and has nowhere to go. “There was nothing left for me in Jenin but scraps of my childhood ..lost forever...patrolling Israeli soldiers” (p. 158). The ruthless ruler who creates inequitable structures of power by investing in and managing the life and death of Palestinians.

Dutta and Hossain (2012) examine abrogation and appropriation, which confirms Amal's appropriation, making her unfit for that environment until she totally abandons her past and loses her way. Her past creates a sense of shame, and she categorises herself: "World's rubbish which is left to tread in its own misery and excrement" (p. 174). Mbembé contends that necropolitics shifts the focus from 'making live to letting die'. The troops act as a hidden god on the fate of *Ein Hod* residents when they announce: “Gather the valuables...Go to the well, ordered a voice ... a hidden god, distributing destinies” (p.30). Settler colonial regimes use structures of power both ideologically and repressively. Abulhawa unmasks the plan of Israeli settlers: “They claimed the villas of Qatamon as *old Jewish homes*...Coins in the Palestinian earth as...culmination of centuries of Palestinian farmers perfecting the art of citrus growing” (p. 263).

The author attempts to cross the boundaries between divergent cultures and manifest settler colonial tendencies prevalent among Jews. They extended their homes and expanded their territory by ruining the land and traditions of Palestinians. Amal's daughter Sara transmits the deadly scenes

of Jenin after a long siege of the distress of her people's deaths. She explains: "Haj Salem was buried alive in his home...crushed to death by a bulldozer. Is this what it means to be Palestinian?" (p. 314). Israel is utilising colonial powers of war machines, which halt her, and she pitied the death of the old man. The ongoing dehumanisation of Palestinians, coupled with their persistent harassment and forced removal from their residences, underscores the colonial and apartheid foundations of Israel, leading to the displacement and devastation of the indigenous Palestinian community. The operations of disciplinary normalisation create more chaos and devastation in the lives of the natives: "The United Nations had recorded 2,125 Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and 652 violations of Lebanese territorial waters" (p. 211). Yousef thinks of violations: "Israel would find a reason to invade regardless of whether the PLO took action" (p. 212).

The never-ending occupation has had a long-lasting impression on the protagonist's life. She recalls the devastation of Lebanon: "By August, the results were 17,500 civilians killed, 40,000 wounded, 40,000 homeless, and 100,000 without shelter" (p.219). Israelis represent the colonial hegemon, while Palestinians are depicted as the *Other* through an Orientalist lens. The harsh treatment inflicted upon Palestinians by Israel embodies Orientalist principles, prompting Amal to engage in resistance efforts as a human rights advocate. Her commitment to liberating her people from the bonds of colonial oppression ultimately leads to her tragic demise. The Palestinians have been depicted as deplorable beings having no worth when alive, and even after death, they are not capable of getting a proper burial. "This was a mass killing, an incident...*incident*...it was a war crime...dozens of bodies, killed in the heat of combat" (p. 225). As Ghanim (2011) has argued, the Occupied Palestinian Territories are a 'space of exception' in contrast to the 'normal space' of Israel. 'The Separation Wall' has become a master signifier, marking the difference between the two opposite spaces. Constructing these physical and symbolic boundaries demarcates boundaries between one kind of people, who, due to their culture and values, can expand their biological existence into a political and social existence, and another kind of people, who, by their very essence and due to the barbaric position, continue to inhabit, cannot be eligible for a political supplement that will include them in the polis, thus expanding their existence beyond the biological. Abulhawa is the first to systematically recognise the structural origins of this violence while also documenting the role of Palestinian women in opposing the various sources of violence. Furthermore, she pays close attention to the structural power imbalances between the occupier and the occupied, which manifest in the realm of gender relations. Abulhawa begins with the cruel death scene of Fatima and Falasteen and exposes the true face of Israeli barbarism with innocent women and children:

The women...their corpses lay draped over a pile of rubble...she was dead. Someone had slit open the woman's stomach, cutting sideways and then upwards, perhaps trying to kill her unborn child; her eyes were wide open, her dark face frozen in horror.

(p.226)

The vulnerabilities and mistreatment faced by Palestinian women are linked to how nationalist narratives shape the female body to appropriate it for a conceptual national identity. This situation exposes women's bodies to the risk of being '*weaponised*,' a term utilised by various women interviewed by Kevorkian (2009). Gordon (2008) contends that Israel focused on a range of controlling measures characterised by a form of sovereign power, which operated more through the suspension of the law than through its enforcement. "We are anaesthetised to the guns constantly pointed at us... terror we have...few westerners ever will. Pugliese's (2013) insights regarding entities classified as neither human nor animal are significant, as separating Palestinians

from the human category illustrates the various mechanisms and narratives employed in the creation of death-worlds and environments in occupied Palestine. Yousef, in his rage and torment, points out this behaviour of the hegemon towards the bare lives of Palestinians: "THEY SLAUGHTERED MY WIFE, AND MY CHILDREN LIKE LAMBS!" (p. 227). The innumerable deaths of Palestinian civilians have been considered invisible or ignored for many years.

Amal postulates that individuals who experience death do not merely exist within realms of death; rather, it is death that permeates their existence. Life and death are inextricably linked, with bodies bearing the harsh imprints of mortality. Beyond the physical form, these concepts draw inspiration from Johnson, G. A. (2017) evaluation of Pontay's philosophy of the flesh, yet the intrusion of violent death marks this flesh.

I had to take the babies and put them in buckets of water to put out the flames...out half an hour later, they were still burning...The next morning, Amal took the tiny corpses out of the mortuary for burial. To her horror, they again burst into flames.

(p. 219)

Spinoza's exploration of violence advances in this direction by recognising the vitality that extreme violence is unable to extinguish. This vitality is referred to as *conatus*, a life force that exists in a continuous relationship with the realm of death through the experience of wounding. This phenomenological perspective on existence in the presence of death shifts the focus of necropolitics from abstract transcendental concepts to a more grounded engagement with lived experiences. However, the mechanism of power control works to overpower the masses when Milton expresses his fury over the attack on the US embassy in Beirut and manifests: "I think we ought to carpet bomb the whole fucking place. Get rid of every last sand nigger" (p.238). This statement remarks on bewildering and belittling the Palestinian people, considering their behaviour unsophisticated, their culture primitive, and their bodies as a scar on the earth.

The narrator laments the forgotten killing fields and mass graves in the Shatila refugee camp. The exercise of power over individuals extends beyond mere physical control. The principle of 'divide and rule' emerges as a particularly effective tactic for dismantling the social cohesion within any community, as can be illustrated in "United Nations refugee camp stretched below me in one square kilometre, so many souls packed in for the long and stubborn wait to return to their Palestine" (p. 162). Foucault's constant surveillance as a disciplinary punishment highlights Yousef's dilemma: "Yousef crouched naked on the precipice of life, his hands tied behind his back, his face hooded. Overcrowded now with detainees after the war" (p.97). Abulhawa describes the horrors of war: "They were everywhere. When we had seen a hundred bodies, we stopped counting---lying corpses...knifed and machine gunned to death (p.288). The focal point of projection of these scenes by Abulhawa is to tell the world the worsening condition of Palestinian subjugated lives and dead bodies. Depicting a population or territory as besieged implies that it is subjected to forced isolation, with its resources severed, and that it becomes the target of a calculated deprivation executed through methods such as confinement, enclosure, and obstruction.

Following Mbembé, Abulhawa's narrative encapsulates the idea of custodial killings of Palestinian bodies, considering them as bare humans. "In July 1981, Israeli jets killed two hundred civilians in a single raid on Beirut" (p. 211). They plan to wipe out the resistance once and for all. While this is actually a death world lived by its inhabitants, Yousef connects himself with the dead bodies, having the urge to be part of them. He confesses his aberration on insalubrious battlefields, stating:

“I no longer possess myself. I drown in a sorrow you cannot fathom, and a rage you cannot imagine presses upon my heart... He declares himself as I am a haunted man, possessed now by their corpses. A storm brews inside me. I do not sleep, and I cannot see the sun”

(p.241)

The concept of the wound is intricately linked to death and political discourse. Doucet (2024) argues that the aforementioned excerpt exemplifies one way the wounded body is known as a fragmented entity, existing in a transitional phase toward wholeness. This state of incompleteness, therefore, disrupts bodily identity, raising some of the mechanisms in which thanapolitics work in tandem with necropolitics to lay bare the severed bodies as expressed in *Mornings in Jenin* (Doucet, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The malevolent triangle of authority, comprising security forces, generally relegates individuals within the realms of necessity and apprehension. Individuals are compelled to silence their voices, attune their ears to governmental propaganda, and focus their gaze on state-controlled apparatuses. Any effort to disrupt this nefarious network of power is likely to fail, if not in violence. *Mornings in Jenin* illustrates this very insatiable appetite for power exhibited by all parties involved, including the government and colonisers. This relentless pursuit of power transforms the political landscape into a brutal contest. The government’s insatiable desire for control ensnares the president and his associates in an unending struggle for dominance, as any shift in power dynamics could prove disastrous, particularly for those who dare to challenge the oppressor. Meanwhile, the populace remains lacking fundamental necessities and rights that have been unjustly stripped away, leaving them deprived of freedom, stability, and forced into a state of near starvation and servitude. Consequently, the state enforces its authority through “a meticulously organised system that dictates, shaping the thoughts and behaviour of every citizen within this dystopian framework” (Gerhard, 2012, p. 49). Amal’s narrative exemplifies this complex relationship between resistance and compliance. Palestinian women are not merely victims; they actively combat violence by establishing ‘counter-spaces.’ This reflects their capacity to assert agency within militarised environments, thereby challenging the prevailing narratives that seek to silence them.

The study posits that Abulhawa’s skilful articulation of human impermanence in crushing political landscapes is indispensable. Foreign occupation curtails personal freedom, reducing humans to *small beings*. Israel’s war not only includes mass casualties; it affects every aspect of human life, along with destroying every institution, ranging from education to the court. Butler (2009) posits, “if specific lives are deemed unworthy of being classified as lives, or if they are inherently inconceivable as lives within particular epistemological frameworks, then such lives are neither fully lived nor fully lost” (p. 1). This paper, therefore, highlights the Palestinian perspective by focusing on their hardships and experiences under oppressive Israeli occupation. Abulhawa presents this very Palestinian narrative rather boldly, spanning significant events in Palestinian history that are often sanitised by the international media. This has been achieved through thanatopolitical strategies, which include the use of pellet guns, chemical weapons, cluster bombs, drone strikes resulting in collateral damage, and prolonged sieges. By focusing on *Mornings in Jenin*, this paper argues that the brutal destruction of Palestinian lives, widely circulated in global perception, has rendered Palestinians as lacking substance.

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