

# Historicity of Oppressive Power and Identity: Echoes of Victimhood in Literary Discourse

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**Abstract**—This comparative study between Orwell’s *Animal Farm (AF)* (1945) and Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin (MIJ)* (2010) aims to underscore the dynamics of victimhood and oppression, emphasizing how the oppressed can switch roles and become the oppressor due to complex political, ontological and psychological mechanisms. Fanon’s analysis of the collective consciousness of the victim and the oppressor helps to clarify the underlying structures that drive the victim to replicate the role of the oppressor. *MIJ*, a novel centered on the Palestinian-Israeli struggle, represents the predicament of the oppressed becoming the oppressor. *AF*, by contrast, is a satirical account of how revolutionaries who grasp power in the name of ethical ideals often transmute those same ideals to administer a new form of oppression. Orwell’s employment of allegory in *AF* provides a compelling framework through which oppression can be explored in both universal and specific contexts. As in *MIJ*, the oppressed-oppressor predicament deepens when centers of power align to sustain unethical conditions of oppression that serve their own interests.

**Index Terms**—Palestine, Israel, identity, victimhood, oppression

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to show how literary aesthetics can deepen the reader’s awareness of the complexity of the injustices practiced against the oppressed. Although *AF* (1945) by George Orwell and *MIJ* (2010) by Suzan Abulhawa belong to different eras and settings, both novels demonstrate how the oppressed can shift roles and become the oppressor through various political and psychological stimuli. Orwell’s novel belongs to the dystopian allegory genre and provides some universal dynamics that explain why an oppressed can become an oppressor. Abulhawa’s novel is concerned with showing the traumas that the Palestinians suffer from at the hands of the Israelis, who themselves endured immense suffering in Germany during the Holocaust (1933–1945).

According to Fanon, the world is a Manichean place inhabited by “different species, namely, masters and slaves, colonizers and colonized” (Bulhan, 1985, p. 119; Fanon, 1952, 1959, 1961). The formerly oppressed feel the urge to assert their identity through a persistent reclamation of their history as victims who are entitled to acts of retribution. Their history of victimhood is constantly framed through a narrative of suffering and moral vindication (Fanon, 1963). In *MIJ*, Abulhawa depicts the above division of Manichean camps dictated by the formerly oppressed who project the Palestinians as the ‘evil camp’ as opposed to the Israelis as the ‘angelic camp’. The deployment of religious extremism, anti-Semitic tropes, and narratives of self-victimization becomes instrumental in ensuring international legitimacy and justifying the violence against Palestinian people. Oppressors subdue the oppressed violently and nonviolently to preclude resistance and impose compliance, a process which Fanon (1952) describes as a dialectic of psychosocial rehabilitation.

In *MIJ*, Amal, the protagonist, listens to her Lebanese friend, Fatima, saying, “the Israeli occupation exposes us very young to the extremes of our emotions, until we cannot feel except in the extreme” (p. 151). Wolfe (2016) argues that instead of merely substituting one possessor for another, colonizers seek to replace the whole system of terrestrial tenure with a different oppressive structure. Similarly, Hegel and Mannoni discuss how the “quest for self-realization” can be achieved through the “conquest of the other”. As in the European colonization of others’ lands, an affirmation of the superiority of the self has required the existence of a collective psyche that is based on the “massive dehumanization of others” (Bulhan, 1985, pp. 119, 120).

In *MIJ*, Abulhawa illustrates how the Israeli state wages a series of violent wars against the Palestinian population, leading to massive displacement, loss of life, and land confiscation. Today, Palestinian refugees constitute nearly one-third of the global refugee population. Since their expulsion in 1948, statelessness has shaped the lives of four generations of Palestinian refugees. The eradication of the name Palestine from the geopolitical map was one of the key goals of the Zionist colonial project (Said, 1993, 2001; Dana & Jarbawi, 2017). While the Israeli occupation continues to keep Jewish exclusivity on the Palestinian land, the Palestinians’ endeavors to resist displacement persist. The Zionist’s ideology is

primarily based on eliminating the native (Dana & Jarbawi, 2017, 2019; Williams, 2014). Massad (2006) maintains that following the Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, Zionists appropriated the language of national liberation, claiming historic Palestine as their own and aligning themselves with national self-determination movements at the time.<sup>1</sup>

Adopting the epic narrative form in *MIJ*, Abulhawa describes the life of four generations of a Palestinian family, their bitter experience of displacement, and their hope to return. Amal's family, Abulheja, lives in the historic village of Ein-Hod, which they flee to Jenin refugee camp after the 1967 war. On the day the family attempts to escape from the camp, an Israeli soldier kidnaps Ismael, the family's eldest son, and brings him to his wife who has lost her son in the Holocaust. Devastated and shocked, Amal's mother falls into a deep depression. Hasan, Amal's father, spends his days working, distancing himself from the rest of the family. His choice to be distant does not prevent him from reading to Amal in the evening, encouraging her to pursue education as a powerful tool against oppression. During one of the Israeli attacks on the camp, Amal seeks refuge in a bomb shelter and manages to survive for a week on her own. At this point, she feels that she should leave Jenin to pursue her education, complying with her father's wish. The story of Amal and her family is representative of many Palestinian refugee families. The Palestinians have to bear the terrible consequences of the oppression that the Jews were subjected to at the hand of the Nazis, a situation that is rejected by many Jews who suffered the Holocaust themselves. Said (1979, 1998, 2010), Finkelstein (2000) and many Jewish thinkers believe that the establishment of Israel serves Western imperial policy in the Arab region. In *MIJ*, Abulhawa depicts the horror experienced by the Palestinians as a result of wars and forced emigrations, exacerbated by the absence of international support and the stark military imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians. Basima is Amal's paternal grandmother who dies tragically near the family's olive orchard after a Zionist bomb explodes nearby:

Damn Zionists! What the hell do they want from us?" Basima screamed toward the rising smoke, her husband's fears as much hers now. Basima's anxiety knotted in her chest, in her heart, and made her head spin, legs weaken, until she fell amid her rosebushes, clutching her right shoulder. She was still alive when Dalia<sup>2</sup> ran to her, just in time to hear her last words: "*Binti, binti.*" My daughter, my daughter. (*MIJ*, p. 12)

On the other hand, Orwell in *AF* illustrates how the previously victimized become oppressors upon assuming power. He introduces a broad conceptual framework for identifying the cyclical nature of oppression and power, which can be applied to specific historical and political contexts, such as the Palestinian experience under the Israeli occupation. Said in *The Question of Palestine* (1992) maintains that what the Zionists did to the Palestinians is different from what the Nazis did to the Jews, but the disastrous fact is that the victims of one of the biggest wrongs in recent history, the Jews, became oppressors of the Palestinians.

*AF* is about a group of animals who rebel against their human farmer in the hope of establishing a society where the animals can be equal and free. Unfortunately, the animals betray their own rebellion by emulating the behaviors of their human oppressor. They ultimately fall under the dictatorship of the pig Napoleon, who has led the uprising against the human farmer. *AF* exposes political dictatorships and satirizes the fragility of the so-called European democracy. Orwell's interest in exposing the dynamics of oppressive regimes manifests in another novel, *1984* (1949), (McCrum, 2009). The story takes place in an imagined future where many countries become victims of severe wars. Both *AF* and *1984* reveal tyranny's hypocrisy and implicitly criticize both Stalinism and Soviet communism for their brutality and dogmatism (Rad, 2015). During Stalin's dictatorship, the Russians suffered tremendously as when Stalin destroyed numerous beautiful Russian monuments, buildings, cultural treasures, and Moscow's most beautiful cathedrals (Strong, 1956).

In *AF*, Orwell moves beyond the direct context of the Russian Revolution and Stalinist USSR to delve into core components of human identity and the corruptibility of power. Through the allegorical structure and anthropomorphized characters, Orwell presents a satirical chronicle that condemns not only Soviet autocracy but also broader configurations of tyrannical conduct. The novel's aesthetic simplicity does not reduce the intricacy of its thematic concerns and political implications; rather, it enables the readers to access smoothly a profound text that focuses on the nature of totalitarianism. Through the utilization of universal archetypes, Orwell's narrative attains global significance, enabling a critical examination of oppressive identities and configurations across diverse socio-political contexts. Said (1979) shows how forms of validation operate within a colonial and cultural narrative to normalize occupation and demonize resistance movements. Several human rights organizations, including Amnesty International (2022), have classified the Israeli authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as systemically oppressive and racist.<sup>3</sup> Orwell's satirical approach and the depth with which he delves into the formation of oppressors' identity through animal characters deepen the reader's

<sup>1</sup> See Human Rights Watch. (2024, November 14). Israel accused of war crimes over Gaza displacements. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/human-rights-watch-accuses-israel-war-crimes-over-gaza-displacements-2024-11-14/>. Retrieved: 17, 5, 2025.

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Cadena SER. (2025, May 3). Israel mata a medio centenar de gazatíes, entre ellos niños, tras los ataques de las últimas horas.

<https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/03/israel-mata-a-medio-centenar-de-gazaties-entre-ellos-ninos-tras-los-ataques-de-las-ultimas-horas-cadena-ser/>. Retrieved: 17, 5, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Dalia is Amal's mother.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International. (2022). *Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>. Retrieved: 10, 5, 2025.

consciousness of deprived human traits everywhere. Abulhawa paints in words dramatic images of the traumatized Palestinians and catches the details of their psychological and physical suffering documented in authentic records and inspired by her own experience as a refugee. The photographic style with which she portrays the Palestinian crisis reinforces the link between her narrative and the reader, raising awareness of the ruthless nature of occupation.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section introduces scholarly work on the historical and political backgrounds of the conflicts projected in *MIJ* and *AF*, ethical and psychological dynamics of the oppressed-oppressor relationship, and the indispensable link between poetics and politics. The aim is to show how the study offers a new comparative reading of the two novels, highlighting how contextual knowledge informs the narratives of Orwell and Abulhawa, shapes their respective ethical perspectives, and deepens the understanding of the complex nature of systemic oppression.

The Israeli occupation of Palestine represents one of the most enduring and widely recognized struggles in modern history. Over the past 120 years, this conflict has undergone multiple transformations, shaped by evolving political dynamics, shifting territorial boundaries, and significant historical developments. Freire (2022) argues that “the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors” (p. 123; Bano, 2015). In analyzing Václav Havel’s works, Danaher (2015) demonstrates how the ruling party in Czechoslovakia initially promised freedom and equality but, in the aftermath of the revolution, it became a totalitarian regime that sustained the very tyranny it had claimed to resist. This cyclic pattern is exposed in Orwell’s *AF*, where the pigs, after overthrowing Mr. Jones, steadily assume his controlling position and eventually reproduce the very system of tyranny they once combat. For, the animals continue to be “cold, and usually hungry as well” (*AF*, p. 54). Despite their initial optimism for freedom and justice, the animals find themselves imperiled by even worse enslavement under the pigs’ regime. Their escalating suffering, starvation, and humiliation go largely uncontested due to their lack of awareness and surrender to the exploitative rhetoric of the ruling pigs. Similarly, *MIJ* portrays the Israeli military as a colonizing force that forcibly displaces native Palestinians through an ideology of dispossession that vindicates territorial domination through claims of superiority over the colonized groups of people (Raslan, 2017; Bulhan, 1985; Mami, 2020; Shalabi, 2024; Ibrahim, 2017).

Totalitarian regimes are frequently led by individuals driven by unquenchable desires for power, manipulating mass media to help them carry on with their personal agendas, silence nonconformist voices, and violate basic human rights (Cudd, 2015). One of the most important issues that political and psychological theories attempt to address is understanding how individuals who determinedly oppose tyranny can later reproduce and sustain its apparatuses. This paradox has been examined by leading intellectuals, including Chomsky (2002, 2014), Said (1991), Finkelstein (2000), and Ashcroft et al. (2000). Fanon (1952) articulates a crucial feature of this transformation, referring to it as “a massive psychoexistential complex” (p. 14), where the oppressed internalize the identity of their oppressors, often seeking either to fight or to supplant it. Fanon deals with dynamics of colonialism between white colonizers and black colonized subjects. Similarly, in his novel, *Age of Iron*, Coetzee (1990) depicts the white oppressor as someone alienated from both the exterior world and his own conscience, driven by ego and antagonism. This psychological notion finds actual resonance in the exodus of European Jews to Palestine in the mid-twentieth century. While justified as a recuperation of ancestral inheritance, this exodus has led (and continues to lead) to the further displacement of the Palestinian people and the nonstop expansion of Israeli settlements. Despite years of peace negotiations and military struggles, the Palestinian predicament stays unresolved and continues to worsen (Fischer, 2020).

Abulhawa’s *MIJ* offers a moving fictionalized description of this ongoing crisis. Born in Kuwait to Palestinian refugees of the 1967 war, Abulhawa writes from the context of American *aide-mémoire* culture. The novel covers the period from the 1930s to 2002, sketching the experiences of one Palestinian family. While alluding to the genocide of European Jews and its post-traumatic legacy, Abulhawa is critical of the retaliatory mentality that drives victims of one historical trauma to become agents of oppression in new contexts. She discusses the overriding Holocaust narrative understood as a historically unique event and the culmination of irrational Gentile antisemitism—a narrative that Finkelstein (2000) argues is deeply rooted in Zionist dogmas. Abulhawa shows Palestinians who remain in their homes after the occupation as epitomes of *sumud* (steadfastness), placing them as guardians of a collective memory and national identity. By recognizing suffering on both Jewish and Palestinian sides, she calls for a shared human empathy that contests the one-sided Israeli narrative (Al-Ma’amari, 2014). Her work demonstrates how literary texts can serve as platforms for deconstructing reified national historiographies (Maghfiroh, 2020).

This study offers the first comparative reading of *MIJ* alongside George Orwell’s *AF* (1945) to illustrate how dynamics of oppression shape identities and to reveal the universality of oppression as a human phenomenon. Although each text mirrors different political and historical contexts, Orwell’s allegory provides a conceptual lens through which the alteration of the oppressed into the oppressor can be explored. As a political allegory devoid of specific temporality, spatial, or racial identifiers, *AF* functions as a transhistorical framework that clarifies the mechanisms of domination, resistance, and moral betrayal as depicted in *MIJ* and found in reality.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fanon (1952, 1961), Said (1991, 1994), and Bhabha (1994) study in depth discourses that colonizers utilize to continue with their expansionist plans and the enormous tragic bearing that occupation/colonization has on the lives of occupied/colonized people. Obliterating or supplanting the identity of the native becomes necessary for the colonizer to strengthen their grip on the colonized and gain more control over land. Due to unrelenting Palestinian resistance movements, the Zionist project continues to be challenged and incomplete (Masalha, 1992; Rodopoulos, 2010). The affirmation that Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people is authenticated by many credible international documents and United Nations resolutions.<sup>4</sup> The Palestinians have been living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea for centuries and the commonly reiterated phrase "people of the land" refers to a continuous presence on the land rather than to ethnic or religious continuity (Dana & Jarbawi, 2017; Raslan, 2017).

Oppression appears recurrently in world history; those who have been mistreated in the past often become the oppressors themselves (Gomes, 2017; Freire, 2022). According to Crossed (2021), the state of Israel is the best example of oppressed people turning oppressors. During World War II, almost 6 million Jews and others of Jewish ancestry were killed. Nowadays, according to a Human Rights Watch study (2019), Israelis continue to oppress and discriminate against Palestinians. Ironically, the Israelis are now subjecting Palestinians and Gazans in the same way that the Nazis incarcerated Jews in ghettos and camps. They have failed to look back at the oppression history of their own people and have instead committed the same atrocities against Palestinians. Finkelstein (2000) states, "in the face of the sufferings of African-Americans, Vietnamese and Palestinians, my mother's credo always was: We are all holocaust victims" (p. 8).

Postcolonial theory is primarily engaged in disputing the universalist assumptions developed by liberal humanist critics (Barry, 2017). This theoretical standpoint is relevant in analyzing the Israeli propaganda and the broader geopolitical efforts to legitimize Israel's dominion, often through the support of other nation-states. The legacy of colonialism, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, gave rise to a discourse of 'high colonialism' that is currently being critically re-evaluated and ethically condemned by postcolonial theorists. While official decolonization has taken place in many regions, postcolonial theory continues to cross-examine current forms of neocolonialism manifest in economic, political, and cultural dependencies that continue in the post-independence era (see Castle, 2007; Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007). Postcolonial theory interconnects with several disciplines that share a common concern, namely how histories of imperialism continue to shape postcolonial identities (Elam, 2019). Foundational thinkers such as Fanon and Memmi, writing in the early 1960s, were influenced by dialectical frameworks rooted in Hegelian and Marxist thoughts to uncover the psychological and political dimensions of colonial domination (Castle, 2007; Parker, 2019). In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon, trained as a psychiatrist, was particularly interested in colonial oppression and its influence on identity formation, interrogating deeply the complexities of racial estrangement within colonial and postcolonial societies. In *MIJ*, scenes depicting Israelis' feelings of superiority over Palestinians evoke Fanon's views of colonial hierarchies and the psychology of domination. Similarly, in *AF*, the pigs assert their dominance over other animals, rationalizing their control as a natural right, echoing colonial power structures. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon emphasizes the importance of national consciousness and resistance in the struggle for decolonization (Castle, 2007; Parker, 2019; Said, 1979, 1994a, 1994b). Said, drawing upon Michel Foucault's concept of discursive configurations, critically observes how Western scholarship on the East has preserved structures of domination through cultural representations. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said argues that imperial discourse constructs the East as the "Other" in a binary opposition to the West, emphasizing a hegemonic worldview grounded in a Manichean rift between "us" and "them" (Castle, 2007; Hamadi, 2014; Barry, 2017; Parker, 2019).

A key element of postcolonial critique manifests in the acknowledgment of hybridity, vulnerable identities and the centrality of intercultural negotiation. Stuart Hall (1997) challenges essentialist views of identity by asserting that national histories are always intertwined with the colonial experience. He writes, "there is no English history without that other history. It's nonsense to imagine that identity is defined by people who look, act, and think similarly. Whether as a process, or a narrative, or a discourse, it is always told from the standpoint of the Other" (pp. 48–49). According to Hall, colonial and racist ideologies tend to present the colonizers' identities as unified and grounded in shared values, unlike the disintegrated and disturbed identities of the colonized.

The theme of exile is also pivotal to postcolonial theory, often defined as a situation of profound psychological and physical disruption. In *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000), Said describes exile as "both fascinating to consider and dreadful to experience. It is the unbridgeable divide that exists between a human person and his or her native land, between the self and its true home ... Exile's successes are forever destroyed by the loss of something irreplaceable" (p. 173; Butler, 2003; Abu-Shomar, 2019). In *MIJ*, Amal, exemplifies this trauma. Her enduring sense of loss accentuates

<sup>4</sup> -United Nations General Assembly. (2024, December 17). *The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination* (A/RES/79/163). <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/the-right-of-the-palestinian-people-to-self-determination-general-assembly-resolution-a-res-79-163/>; (2024, April 5). Retrieved: 12, 5, 2025.

- United Nations Human Rights Council. *Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination* (A/HRC/RES/55/30).

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-of-the-palestinian-people-to-self-determination-hrc-55apr24/>. Retrieved: 12, 5, 2025.

-United Nations General Assembly. (2004, May 6). *Status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* (A/RES/58/292).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Resolution\\_58/292](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_58/292). Retrieved: 12, 5, 2025. - United Nations General Assembly. (1988, December 15). *Question of Palestine* (A/RES/43/177). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Resolution\\_43/177](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_43/177). Retrieved: 12, 5, 2025.

the permanence of the psychological wounds of exile. She keeps reiterating, “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” (*MIJ*, p. 54). Said (1994) also contends that literature is always entrenched in specific historical and political contexts, fashioned by power relations that often appear shrouded in munificent rhetoric. As he notes, the “rhetoric of power produces an illusion of benevolence” (p. 17). Amal’s memories and identity are deeply influenced by both sad and joyful memories of her homeland. Said (1992), further argues that Western representations of the Palestinian issue are mostly shaped by a Zionist narrative, leaving Palestinians politically marginalized on the international stage.

The overlap between colonialism and occupation becomes evident when an occupying/colonizing power extends its domination beyond temporary administration, engaging in practices characteristic of colonialism, such as settlement expansion, resource exploitation, and cultural adaptation. In such cases, the occupation may evolve into a *de facto* colonial situation, blurring the lines between colonization and occupation. For instance, if an occupying power begins to exploit natural resources of the occupied land for its own advantage, this deed lines up more with colonial practices. The *Al-Haq* report remarks that “the desire to control resources has always been a feature of colonialism”, and that “the law of occupation consigns stringent limits on an occupant’s rights to exploit the natural resources of a land it occupies” (Scobbie, 2012, p. 4; Osterhammel, 2017). Said (1993) clarifies how international law differentiates between temporary military occupation and colonialism and how real-world examples often obscure these borders. Based on this explanation, Palestine can be recognized as both an occupied and a colonized land.

By applying postcolonial theory to *MIJ* and *AF*, it becomes obvious that both works explore structures of authority, the management of identity, and the long-lasting psychological effects of oppression. While Abulhawa highlights the colonial dispossession of Palestinians through lived experience, Orwell uses allegory to expose how revolutionary ideals can replicate the same hierarchies they seek to dismantle. In *MIJ*, Susan Abulhawa depicts the Palestinian experience of forced exile and cultural expurgation as an immediate result of Zionist settler-colonialism (Alkodimi, 2019). Amal, the protagonist, represents a discontinuous state of being, one who struggles to reconcile her fractured identity in diaspora with her longing for a lost homeland (Said, 2000). This inner disintegration recalls the ailment of the animals in Orwell’s *AF*, who find themselves similarly distanced from the rebellion they initiated. As the pigs redraft history and restrain language, they mimic the colonial approach of controlling discourse to strengthen dominance, what Said (1978) sees as a controlled production of knowledge. Furthermore, Fanon’s account of the psychological effects of colonization serves to explain the desolation of characters like Amal and Boxer, whose trust in political systems is ultimately defeated. In both works, coercion operates not only through corporeal control, but also through manipulation of remembrance, narrative, and the very perception of “self”.

In conclusion, postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories together offer a rich background for exploring various aspects of political and psychological oppression portrayed in *MIJ and AF*. Postcolonial theory underscores the influence of colonialism, dislocation, and resistance on uprooted people like Amal and other members of her family. It proves useful in analyzing Orwell’s allegorical critique of oppression and totalitarianism. Psychoanalytic theory deepens our understanding of how trauma, repression, and identity formation work under situations of unrelenting violence and hegemony, whether in the individual tragedies of deprivation faced by Palestinians or in the maneuvered consciousness of Orwell’s animals. Together, these theoretical insights allow for a comparative exploration that focuses on both the underlying structure of domination and the internal psychic traumas they cause. Both theories facilitate a nuanced interpretation of how collective and individual contests for agency are discussed in both works.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a comparative literary approach, combining close textual analysis with close contextual reading to delve into the dynamics of oppression, resistance and formation of identity in *AF* by George Orwell and *MIJ* by Susan Abul-Alhawa. The research is founded on postcolonial theory, mostly the frameworks developed by Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, alongside comparative literary approaches that underscore thematic and underlying parallels across culturally and historically distinct works.

By underscoring the common thematic emphasis on oppressor-oppressed relations, the study aims to reveal how each novel is informed by the sociopolitical setting of the novelist. Although Orwell writes from a Western standpoint and employs allegory to analyze authoritarian regimes, his work also cross-examines widespread patterns of power, corruption, and ideological manipulation. *AF* illustrates that once revolutionaries ascend to power, they often discard the ideals they once advocated, ultimately replicating the same oppressive powers they initially sought to deconstruct. This reflects Orwell’s belief in the cyclical nature of power and his skepticism about any system’s immunity to corruption. Conversely, *MIJ* can be read contrapuntally in light of Orwell’s allegory: while rooted in a specific geopolitical struggle, *MIJ* reflects the symbolic patterns of domination, historical erasure, and identity reconstruction. Thus, the comparative reading discloses a shared structure of oppression that transcends setting.

Edward Said’s (1994) contrapuntal approach, one that urges reading of texts from the perspectives of both colonizer and colonized, guides the study’s analytical strategy. However, unlike Said, who focuses on liberation and the deconstruction of imperial narratives, Orwell suggests that manifestations of oppression are not exclusive to colonial regimes, but part of a more prevalent human condition. As Mami (2020) argues, different forms of oppression, whether colonial, ideological, or systemic, necessitate context-specific modes of resistance. Exploring oppression requires an

experiential/contextual narrative that clarifies why oppression occurs, how it expresses itself in different eras and places, and how it can be resisted. As in new historicism (Greenblatt, 1990), an interactive dialogue between the reader and the text paves the way for a deeper understanding of how each author's milieu fashions the narrative structure and thematic priorities and how readers' responses to the text can vary significantly. Steven Lynn (2017) underscores the extent to which literature can be an instrumental tool for promoting ideology and enabling transformative potentials, rather than exclusively functioning as a source of pleasure, detached from real-world concerns.

#### V. FROM PALESTINE TO THE FARM: EXPLORATION OF POWER, IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN *MIJ* AND *AF*

In *MIJ*, Susan Abulhawa creates a poignant narrative that echoes the personal and collective traumas of the Palestinian people. Sara expresses her sorrow to her mother Amal in a letter:

Do you know, Mother, that Haj Salem was buried alive in his home? Does he tell you stories in heaven now? I wish I had had a chance to meet him. To see his toothless grin and touch his leathery skin. To beg him, as you did in your youth, for a story from our Palestine. He was over one hundred years old, Mother. To have lived so long, only to be crushed to death by a bulldozer. Is this what it means to be Palestinian? (*MIJ*, p. 243)<sup>5</sup>

Amal suffers successive wars that mark crucial moments in Palestinian history. As a child, she experiences the turmoil of the 1967 Six-Day War. Later, during the 1982-Lebanon War, she loses her husband and other members of her family in the Sabra and Shatila massacre<sup>6</sup>. Devastated and terrified, Amal flees with her daughter, Sara, and seeks refuge in the United States where they both face various forms of discrimination. Fatima, Amal's Lebanese friend, tells her, "Amal, I believe that most Americans do not love as we do. It is not for any inherent deficiency or superiority in them. They live in the safe, shallow, parts that rarely push human emotions into the depths where we dwell" (*MIJ*, p. 51). As an émigré, Amal continues to feel connected to her homeland and actually returns to Jenin during the Second *Intifada*.<sup>7</sup> Amal's narrative encapsulates the Palestinian experience of displacement and struggle for identity in an unfriendly environment. A significant turning point in the novel occurs when Amal discovers that David, an Israeli soldier, is her long-lost brother who was brought up believing that his Jewish parents were his biological parents. The discovery that her brother is in the Israeli military epitomizes the often-incompatible human emotions in the context of a deep-rooted conflict. David's discovery of his biological parents complicates his sense of identity and triggers an inner conflict as he struggles to come to terms with his Palestinian origin. Amal is influenced by the story of her brother and begins to develop a deeper understanding of the human cost of war and the necessity of a just solution for the Palestinian people. She observes how Hassan, her father, and Ari, the Israeli soldier who adopts Ismael, "quickly found commonality in their mutual sense of inadequacy" (*MIJ*, p. 15), for their shared feelings of hardship and loss make them connected somehow.

The narrative in *MIJ* disrupts the Israeli discourse that demonizes Palestinians by exposing the oppressive nature of occupation. Amal's personal journey through sorrow, discovery, and struggle exemplifies a broader political message: the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland, a right completely rejected by Israel. Hasan maintains, "Jews have always lived here. That's why so many more are here now, isn't it? While we believed they were simply seeking refuge, poor souls just wanting to live, they've been amassing weapons to drive us from our homes" (*MIJ*, p. 26). His words challenge the Israelis' narrative implying that violence and enmity are hidden behind the disguise of victimhood. However, before the Israeli occupation, Yahya, a friend of Amal's brother, believes that "a feast as a gesture of friendship" and an "intention to live side by side with them" (*MIJ*, p. 28) is possible. His desire for a peaceful coexistence is shattered by a series of wars and more enforced displacements of Palestinians. Moshe tells Jolanta about the Zionist plan to oust "First the British, then the Arabs" from Palestine (p. 36), rejoicing the birth of the State of Israel and their control over Palestinian lands. Moshe's statement signifies a narrative of erasure and ideological bias, provoking readers to critically weigh the ethical implications of the Israeli discourse and its aggressive international repercussion. Abulhawa's potent use of metaphors, symbols, and paradoxes enhances the emotional and political intricacy of the novel. The nostalgia for the homeland through the symbolism of olives and figs communicates the Palestinians' unbending attachment to their roots. Seeing her sixteen-year-old friend die from a gunshot triggered by an Israeli soldier, Amal contemplates his death through emotional figurative language: "I watch life trickle from the bullet wound of a sixteen-year-old 'example' and marvel how things weak, even words, will turn vicious and merciless to gain power, despite reason or history" (*MIJ*, p. 83).

The name Amal itself, hope in English, symbolizes her people's firm faith in their right to return to Palestine. Amal becomes a symbolic figure of persistence, personifying Said's reflection on Palestinian identity informed by a bitter experience of dispossession and nostalgia. In contrast, characters such as Jolanta<sup>8</sup> and Dalia represent the multifaceted intersections of identity, memory, and historic chronicle. They are Jewish settlers who arrived under the ideological framing of a land "without people", and Palestinians, forced into the role of "a people without a land" (p. 28). This juxtaposition calls for a more nuanced perception of postcolonial dislocation and the ideological maneuvering of history. By depicting both individual narratives and collective traumas, the novel stimulates readers to cross-examine geopolitical discourses and contemplate the layered, often incompatible entitlements to territory, memory, and identity.

<sup>5</sup> Italics as in the original.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on this massacre, check <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-182151/>. Retrieved: 18, 7, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on this *Intifada*, check <https://www.britannica.com/topic/intifada>. Retrieved: 18, 7, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Jolanta is a Polish Holocaust survivor who, along with her husband Moshe, raises the Palestinian child they kidnapped as their own son.

Situated on a farm in England, *AF* starts with the rebellion of animals against their oppressive owner, Mr. Jones. The animals are critical of the human species, declaring, “Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet, he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself” (p. 4). The rebellion against the human farmer is driven by Old Major’s speech, advocating the establishment of a new regime based on justice. However, as the animals take hold of the farm, their values and vision begin to disentangle and Napoleon starts to rise as the authoritarian leader. Orwell does not portray ideological despotism in crude terms of good versus evil. Instead, he exposes the intricacies of manipulative belief systems and the absence of moral conscience within oppressive regimes. For instance, despite the pigs’ relentless proclamation that all humans are enemies, Boxer, the loyal and diligent horse, expresses sadness when a human is wounded during a battle: “I have no wish to take life, not even human life”, repeated Boxer, and his eyes were full of tears (*AF*, p. 32). This incident proves that not all animals accept the governing pigs’ narrative or get fooled by their manipulative rhetoric. Boxer is a decent animal but once he becomes sick because of too much work, the pigs do not remunerate him with a good retirement as they promise; they sell him to a glue factory in return for a crate of whiskey. Napoleon does this on purpose to show the rest of the animals what could happen to them if they become tired, or lazy, or show any expression of empathy for any human being.

Throughout *AF*, the pigs systematically revise the original commandments, primarily founded to ensure security and justice among all animals, to increase their privilege and strengthen autocratic control. For example, the commandment “No animal shall wear clothes” is at first strictly imposed, denoting the denunciation of human deeds. However, it is later revised to permit pigs to wear clothes, signaling their gradual adaptation into the very group they sought to oust. Likewise, the commandment “No animal shall sleep in a bed” is reformed when the pigs inhabit the farm, claiming that relaxation improves their mental ability for governance. The most substantial amendment, however, is the conversion of the final principle into a malicious irony: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (p. 112). This complete change in the revolution’s main ideals exemplifies Orwell’s critique of dictatorial regimes, where speech is rendered a revolutionary rhetoric camouflaging systemic tyranny. For example, Squealer, Napoleon’s rival, “could turn black into white” (*AF*, p. 11). His charismatic character impresses the other animals, particularly through his verbal ability to transform good animals into corrupt ones. This recalls Gramsci’s (1971) concept of cultural hegemony, wherein a leading group upholds power not only by coercion but also by ideology, language, customs, and conventions. The pigs’ utilization of rhetoric, rules, and memory permits them to redefine ethics and reality itself, rendering their governance both natural and legitimate. The early disappearance of the farm’s milk in *AF* “...when they came back in the evening, it was noticed that the milk had disappeared” (Orwell, p. 18) is echoed in *MJ* through the silent kidnapping of Ismael by Israelis. Both situations symbolize the onset of oppressive acts reinforced by ideological validation. Read together, the two novels disclose how overriding powers shape ‘truth’ and morals to justify inequality, resonating with Fanon’s (1963) affirmation that colonial viciousness is not only physical but ideological as it dictates redefinitions of identity and remembrance. Orwell and Abulhawa urge readers to interrogate how revolutionary narratives can become coercive apparatus.

The concluding lines of *AF* emphasize how the pigs’ regime eventually becomes a replica of the very regime the pigs initially resisted: “Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which” (p. 180). This final scene shows the complete collapse of the pigs’ revolutionary principles, exposing how those who grasp power in the name of democracy end up reproducing the same structures of oppression they once denounced. The depiction of the ceaseless metamorphosis of faces from pig to human is a powerful allegorical moment in Orwell’s critique of totalitarianism, suggesting that power, when unrestricted, debases even the most passionate and well-intentioned leaders. The reiteration of the visual image “from pig to man, and from man to pig” asserts the misty borders between savior and oppressor and the cyclical nature of authoritarian regimes.

Napoleon’s pursuit of human actions, such as working in trade, drinking alcohol, and living in luxury, underscores the demeaning influence of power. The once-clear doctrines of Animalism are redrafted to validate the pigs’ increasing indulgence in luxury, culminating in the ill-famed announcement that “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (p. 97). Through this allegory, Orwell critiques the Soviet Union’s descent into dictatorship, particularly under Joseph Stalin. He exposes the paradox of revolutionaries who, once in power, become the very oppressors they sought to overthrow. The pigs’ betrayal of the original revolutionary ideals reflects the broader betrayal of the Russian Revolution’s promises. Orwell’s use of irony, particularly through the transformation of the pigs, demonstrates the way in which idealistic movements can be deprived by those who seize power. The novel’s core theme is a timeless admonitory tale: Orwell, while supporting allegiance to socialist ideals, cautions against unchecked power.

By turning historical figures into animals, Napoleon representing Stalin, Snowball representing Trotsky, and the sheep representing the blindly obedient masses, Orwell reviews the mechanisms of totalitarianism in both the Soviet Union and broader political systems. The animals’ fight for freedom reflects the predicament of oppressed people worldwide, making the novel’s themes universal in scope. In this way, Orwell offers a lens through which readers can assess the inherent risks of any power that assumes its legitimacy under camouflaged moral basis: “And so the tale of confessions and executions went on, until there was a pile of corpses lying before Napoleon’s feet and the air was heavy with the smell of

blood, which had been unknown there since the explosion of Jones" (*AF*, p. 62). In *MIJ*, Amal narrates vividly the suffering of Palestinian people as when "Israel bulldozed the entire Moroccan neighborhood of some two hundred ancient houses and several hundred residents, who were given less than two hours' notice to evacuate. Muslims and Christians alike, Greeks and Armenians saw most of their property confiscated" (p. 244).

The Zionist movement, initially framed as a movement for the survival of the Jews and the protection of their national identity, practices a methodic subjugation of Palestinians. According to Edward Said's definition of orientalism and Frantz Fanon's analysis of settler-colonial psychology, freedom for one group of people can entail the suppression of another. In both novels, hegemony arises as a debasing power that blurs the boundary between persecutors and persecuted. The absence of clear boundary challenges a linear definition of good and bad, implying instead that oppression is a complex structure that can be enforced by any emerging power, irrespective of its initial intentions. By placing *AF* and *MIJ* in dialogical framework, readers are encouraged to question cyclical forms of historical injustices and unrestricted power.

Each of *AF* and *MIJ* employs effective literary approaches to expose tyrannical systems. In *MIJ*, Abulhawa blends the personal with the political, depicting the Palestinian ordeal, forced dislodgment, and the eradication of national identity. She composes a narrative that centers on the penalties of occupation, employing evocative language and depicting intensely emotional characters to prompt empathy and expose the systemic denial of Palestinian rights. The novel functions as both a counter-narrative and a memorial performance, reclaiming Palestinian identity and the right to return to the homeland. Orwell's *AF* employs allegory, irony, and satire to uncover the depravity of revolutionary ideals and the pretentious nature of authoritarianism. Through the anthropomorphized characters and the slow strengthening of power by the pigs, particularly Napoleon, Orwell demonstrates how revolutionary rhetoric can be manipulated to justify violence, suppression, and class stratification. His use of simple style, blunt imagery, and dark wit enhances the ethical impact of his political critique. He excels at making tyranny comprehensible through presenting an accessible allegorical structure that echoes across different settings. On the other hand, Abulhawa transcends the novel's local context by engaging with broader themes of identity, exile, and resistance. Both novelists employ literary techniques, structures, imagery, and tone not only to judge oppressive systems, but also to prompt awareness of the human price of oppression. *MIJ* and *AF* are similar in their exploration of how systems of power distort and twist truth, defeat opposition, and brutalize the oppressed. Through engaging narrative and well utilized literary devices, Abulhawa's emotional realism and Orwell's satirical allegory render their works vital contributions to global discourses on victimhood, identity and liberation.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The dynamics of oppression in George Orwell's *AF* and Susan Abulhawa's *MIJ* emerge differently due to their different cultural, political, and historical backgrounds. Orwell's novel is inspired by Western revolutionary occurrences and uses allegory to demonstrate how obsession with power leads to oppression. Through the triumph of the rebellious pigs, Orwell critiques the cyclic and brutal nature of authority, revealing that replacing one despotic regime with another does not lead to genuine liberation. This theme aligns with Fanon's insight into the repressive and hierarchical relationship between oppressed and oppressor, where the oppressed may eventually adopt analogous repressive deeds as a tool of self-assertion and retribution. This resembles the state of affairs in *MIJ*, where Palestinians are forced to defend their land and identity in the context of their *mêlée* for survival.

Fanon's notion of a Manichean world as divided between victims and victimizers permeates both novels. In *MIJ*, Abulhawa portrays how Palestinians are forced to adopt narratives of victimhood, celebrate martyrdom and defend themselves against the "good" Israelis. In both novels, the oppressed internalize their traumas and emphasize their right to retaliate. Psychosocial conversion is seen by Fanon as the result of colonization/enslavement/occupation. In *MIJ*, Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation becomes indispensable for reclaiming agency, even if it entails enduring suffering or self-annihilation. Amal describes how "toughness found fertile soil in the hearts of Palestinians, and the grains of resistance embedded themselves in their skin. Endurance evolved as a hallmark of refugee society. But the price they paid was the subduing of tender vulnerability. They learned to celebrate martyrdom. Only martyrdom offered freedom. Only in death were they at last invulnerable to Israel. Martyrdom became the ultimate defiance of Israeli occupation" (*MIJ*, p. 91).

Abulhawa's description of Israeli aggression aligns with Fanon's distinction between the oppressor's utilization of both 'illegitimate' and 'legitimate' means to maintain control. The Israeli state justifies its use of force as a justifiable act of self-defense aimed at retrieving the 'promised land', while Palestinian resistance, grounded in their right to the preservation of their homeland, is considered as an act of terrorism. Attempts to subdue Palestinians through promising them full citizenship right and peace are neither fulfilled by the Israelis nor accepted by Palestinians. The disproportionate power dynamics between both sides reveal the strategic use of Israeli 'legality' and rhetoric to destroy Palestinian agency and force Palestinian people to evacuate their homeland.

The theme of violence is focal to both novels. Orwell critiques the 'validation' of brutality and use of ideological rhetoric by those in power, the pigs, to sustain their dominance. Similarly, in *MIJ*, Abulhawa illustrates how the Israeli state defends its violent actions as essential for peace and their own survival. The series of atrocities manifest in both novels echo Fanon's controversy that tyranny cannot be sustained without unceasing violence against the oppressed, both corporeal and psychological. The dynamics of occupying land and psyche, as Fanon describes it, is evident in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where both sides become deep-seated in a cycle of violence and brutalization, stripping away both

the human dignity and identity. Abulhawa condemns the Western and Israeli media's representation of Palestinians as terrorists, while emphasizing the broader geopolitical powers at play, including Western support for Israel's activities due to common strategic interests in the Arab world (Finkelstein, 2002; Said, 1991; Khalidi, 2020; Mishra, 2025). She challenges these overriding narratives and urges the recognition of the legitimate needs of the oppressed. Orwell's *AF* presents a cautionary anecdote about the hazards of power and revolution, while *MIJ* critiques the ways in which oppressed people emerge through the narrative of oppressor as complicit with terrorist scheming and a threat to world peace. Both novels stress the need for a critical exploration of power structures that sustain oppression, advocating a thorough revision of the moral allegations of violence, resistance, and forces that lead to enflaming sanguine conflicts.

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