

**The Precarity and Vulnerability of
Palestinians in Susan Abulhawa's
Mornings in Jenin (2010):
An Intersectional Critique**

By

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Abstract:

The last two years have been a clear witness to the lies of Israel playing victim and its need to defend itself against Hamas. Today most of the world condemns Israel for committing genocide against the Palestinian people. By the time of the publication of this study, the researcher hopes that the genocide would have stopped completely. Feeling an urgent call to address the escalating incidents of violence in Palestine, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) is chosen for this study. The novel depicts the struggle of a Palestinian family for over sixty years amid the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Thus, it acts as a counter narrative against Israeli attempts to erase Palestinian history, culture, and identity. This study adopts an intersectional approach, specifically Patricia Hill Collins's matrix of domination, which attempts to address the different kinds of oppression, involving the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and other social markers, that characters experience. The lives of Palestinians are shaped by power operating through four domains: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal which solidify their oppression. Applying Collins's framework reveals the cost of political violence and emphasizes the role of counter narrative as a form of resistance against oppression.

Keywords: Palestinian Israeli conflict, intersectionality, matrix of domination

الملخص:

ضعف الفلسطينين وعدم استقرارهم فى رواية "بينما ينام العالم" (٢٠١٠)
لسوزان أبو الهوى: دراسة تقاطعية

شكّلت السنتان الماضيتان شاهداً واضحاً على تظاهر إسرائيل بدور الضحية، وادعاءاتها بحاجتها للدفاع عن نفسها ضد حماس، فقد أصبح معظم العالم اليوم يندد بإسرائيل؛ لارتكابها جريمة الإبادة الجماعية ضد الشعب الفلسطيني. وعند نشر هذه الدراسة، تأمل الباحثة أن تكون هذه الإبادة قد توقفت تماماً، وانطلاقاً من الشعور المُلح؛ للتصدي لأحداث العنف المتصاعد في فلسطين، تمّ اختيار رواية "بينما ينام العالم" (٢٠١٠) لسوزان أبو الهوى، موضوعاً لهذه الدراسة؛ حيث تصوّر الرواية معاناة عائلة فلسطينية، على مدى أكثر من ستين عاماً، في خضم الصراع الفلسطيني الإسرائيلي. وبذلك، تُشكّل الرواية سرداً مضاداً لمحاولات إسرائيل محو التاريخ، والثقافة، والهوية الفلسطينية.

تتبنى هذه الدراسة نهجاً تقاطعياً، وتحديدًا مصفوفة الهيمنة لباتريشيا هيل كولينز، تلك التي تحاول معالجة أنواع القمع المختلفة، بما في ذلك تداخل نوع الجنس، والعرق، وغيرها من الدلالات الاجتماعية؛ التي تواجهها الشخصيات؛ إذ تتشكل حياة الفلسطينيين من خلال نظام قمع متشابك، يتجلى عبر هيكل السلطة، والضبطية، والهيمنة، والتي توضح اضطهادهم؛ حيث يكشف تطبيق إطار كولنز النظري، عواقب العنف السياسي، ويؤكد على دور السرد المضاد، كشكل من أشكال المقاومة ضد القمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصراع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني، منهج التّقاطعية، مصفوفة الهيمنة.

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The Palestinian Israeli conflict is an everlasting violent struggle that has started since 1948. Its history is marked by several wars between Israel and Arab countries in addition to Palestinian uprisings (called intifadas) and aggressive Israeli military strikes. The main issues concerning land, borders, and rights have not been resolved till this day resulting in the current war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza that has started in 2023. Back in 2022, the Israeli government that has taken control declared its strategy to expand settlements claiming the presence of a Palestinian state would threaten their security. Consequently, in July 2024, the top court of the UN, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced the illegality of Israel's presence in Occupied Palestinian Territories besides violating international laws on racism and apartheid and called for removal of all settlers. The settlers conducted savage attacks on Palestinian villages. A report by the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs states, "[T]here were 2,208 attacks by settlers against Palestinians resulting in casualties or property damage between January 2024 and June 2025" (BBC). On Wednesday 10 September 2025, the Health Ministry declared, "At least 64,656 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip since October 2023, as five more people died of starvation in the besieged enclave" ("Gaza Death Toll").

Clearly, the last two years have been a witness to the lies of Israel playing victim and its need to defend itself against Hamas. Most of the world today is against Israel for its atrocious actions of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. Feeling an urgent call to address the escalating incidents of violence in Palestine, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) is chosen for this study. Abulhawa, the daughter of refugees, is a Palestinian American novelist and activist. She is the founder and director of *Playgrounds for Palestine*, a charity organization specialized in

establishing playgrounds for refugee children in West Bank and Gaza camps. Having visited Jenin refugee camp in April 2002 after the massacre, she was instigated to write *Mornings in Jenin* (Qabaha 134). The novel was first published in 2006 as *Scar of David* by an American small press that closed. Then, it has been revived by a French publisher, translated by Michèle Valencia, and published as *Les Matins de Jenine*. Later, it has been translated into 30 languages, and in 2010, Bloomsbury published it and changed its title to *Mornings in Jenin*. Furthermore, in 2012, Bloomsbury Qatar published the Arabic version under the title *Beynama Yenam al-Alam (While the World Sleeps)* ("Mornings in Jenin: The Strange and Circuitous Path").

Mornings in Jenin, an international bestseller and a classic in Palestinian literature ("Susan Abulhawa"), depicts the traumatic story of four generations of Abulheja family's exposure to Israeli occupation and torture. Though the genocide is being aired on television, *Mornings in Jenin* creates a significant impact on the readers who come in direct contact with the characters' terrifying stories of torture and horror. The novel is narrated by multiple narrators shifting from first person to third person perspective in a non-chronological way to reflect the plight and trauma of Palestinians. Abulhawa uncovers the dehumanization of the Palestinians in this novel, and this is why it has gained public attention. Judith Butler states the importance of representation: people are humanized when they are represented and their chance is better than those who do not have the privilege to be represented; therefore, they are not worthy of recognition (*Precarious Life* 141). She calls this 'derealization':

It is one thing to argue that first, on the level of discourse, certain lives are not considered lives at all, they cannot be humanized, that they fit no dominant frame for the human, and that their dehumanization occurs first, at this level, and that this level then gives rise to a physical violence that in some sense delivers the message of dehumanization that is already at work in the culture. (*Precarious Life* 34)

Butler explains the quality of human life is based on vulnerability and dependence on others. The degree of vulnerability differs among people. Some lives are important and deserve support and protection while others are insignificant; so, they are neglected, and their death goes unnoticed as they are worthless creatures. Factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and sexuality contribute to the degree of people's vulnerability. The lives considered important are 'grievable' and their death is a catastrophe that deserves to be mourned and action to be taken to even start a war (32), but the other lives are not 'grievable' because "it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already the unburied, if not the unburiable" (34). Abulhawa emphasizes how Palestinians lives are unworthy of attention in a conversation between Amal and Huda about the Israeli attack: "The world cannot possibly let this go on," I said to Huda. "The world?" "Since when does 'the world' give a goddamn about us? You have been away too long, Amal. Go to sleep. You sound too much like an Amreekiyya" (304). Unfortunately, Palestinians know they are dehumanized by most of the world.

All lives, as Butler insists, are ‘grievable’ and that an intimate relationship with the other is not necessary for grief to occur. A political understanding of precariousness and precarity is important. Precariousness refers to people’s vulnerability, mortality, and dependence on others while precarity refers to the unequal distribution of vulnerability, mortality, and dependence according to social and economic systems (*Frames of War* 28). In the Palestinian Israeli conflict, Palestinians are not seen as human beings worthy of protection and are called terrorists by Israel to justify their murder of innocent lives. Butler writes about those whose lives are ‘ungrievable’:

Such populations are ‘lose-able,’ or can be forfeited, precisely because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited; they are cast as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations in need of protection from illegitimate state violence, famine, or pandemics. Consequently, when such lives are lost they are not grievable, since, in the twisted logic that rationalizes their death, the loss of such populations is deemed necessary to protect the lives of ‘the living’. (*Precarious Life* 31)

Butler’s logic explanation provides a clear interpretation of why most of the world has been turning a deaf ear to the plight of Palestinians since 1948. Thus, Abulhawa’s novel acts a political call to enlighten the world about the unspeakable suffering of the Palestinian people and the brutality of Israelis.

Literature Review

Mornings in Jenin has captured the attention of many scholars since it addresses the Palestinian Israeli conflict that

never seems to end. Different critical interpretations have been presented that center upon the following themes: identity, trauma, diaspora, exile, nostalgia, and homeland. For example, Payel Pal analyzes the themes of nostalgia, identity, and homeland. Other Scholars such as Abdulrahman Al-Ma'amari, Noraini Md Yusof, and Ravichandran Vengadasamy apply John Locke's memory theory that states identity is based on our memories and Johann Herder's identity theory that explains national identity is based on a shared culture to analyze the personal and national identity of the Palestinian characters. They assert how characters retain their memories to stress their sense of self. Taking a political stance, Rashad Al Areqi detects the impact of the Israeli attacks in changing the indigenous identity of the Palestinians. Many research papers focus on Amal, the main character, and her life after travelling to America. Samira ZAITER's study employs post-colonial concepts to analyze the novel with a focus on Amal's identity and feelings of nostalgia. Similarly, Aimatul A. Maghfiroh and M. Khoiri trace Amal's diasporic identity through Martin and Nakayama's multi-stages of identity development theory. Other scholars like Ayman M Abu-Shomar ("Diasporic Reconciliations") and Lamiaa Ahmed Rasheed apply diaspora theory to detect the impact of exile on Amal and her identity conflict in America. In another study, Muntadher Ali Mohammed and Haider Hadi Mohammed employ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notions on subaltern studies to trace the moral development of Amal. Having a different perspective, Mette Bruvik analyzes the identity of David/ Ismael using Monika Fludernik and Derek Attridge framework of the Self and the Other to analyze the deep identity conflict within this character. Focusing on dislocated identity, Meg Raj Gharti Magar's study examines the idea of

dislocation and homeland through the scope of Helen Lindholm Schultz, Juliane Hammer, and other critics.

Other studies hold comparisons between *Mornings in Jenin* and other novels such as Yassir Sabri Al Soud's thesis that examines the themes of home, family, nostalgia, identity, and cultural aspects in contemporary Arab American literature. Maurice Ebileeni compares the depiction of Palestinian characters who have Israeli-Jewish identities in *Mornings in Jenin* and Sayed Kashua's *Second Person Singular* showing how the two authors challenge the stereotypes present in mainstream culture. However, a study by Alan Menaged and Nevine Abraham criticizes Abulhawa's depiction of the Jewish characters' identity. Having a different perspective, Nourhan Ashraf Salah analyzes the development of cultural identity in Edna O'Brien's *The Light of the Evening* and *Mornings in Jenin* using Stuart Hall's three stages of cultural identity. Souad BENADDANE and F. Yahia compare *Mornings in Jenin* to 22 selected videos by Bisan Owda and applies the following theoretical frameworks: Achille Mbembe's necropolitics, Marianne Hirsch's post memory, and Homi Bhabha's third space to tackle the themes of displacement and identity in two mediums. Some studies tackle other themes besides identity; for example, two studies, one by Ayman Abu-Shomar ("Unreconciled Strivings"), and the other by Leila Bellour and B. Abdelhafid , delve into analyzing Amal's exilic consciousness and her identity formation in addition to highlighting Abulhawa's humanistic approach to the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Similarly, a comparative study by Abir CHAKER traces the role of memory and the relationship between amnesia and amnesis and memory in three novels: William Faulkner's *Light*

in August, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. The previous studies focus mainly on identity.

Other scholars use psychoanalytic theories to analyze the characters' trauma and suffering. Sara REGGAM and Siti MUHAMAD analyze the impact of trauma upon Dalia and Amal using Dominick La Capra's concept of 'melancholia' and 'mourning'. They argue that the characters remain in a state of melancholia because pain still exists. Likewise, an M.A. by Sona George, and a paper by Samet GÜVEN trace the traumatic impact on characters using trauma theory while Sima Miri studies the consequences of al-Nakba on the psychological well-being of Dalia and Amal in addition to addressing the possibility of healing amid the continuous series of traumas. Another M.A. thesis by Fatema Tuj Johora employs Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* and Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and role of memory to tackle the influence of displacement and trauma on the cultural identity of Palestinian characters. Also in a comparative study, Eman Oulwan traces Palestinian's and Syrian's traumatic experiences of displacement in *Mornings in Jenin* and *Sea Prayer* using Cathy Caruth's trauma concepts and Deborah Horvitz's PTSD symptoms. In addition to exploring themes of empathy and cultural trauma in the context of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, Nina Fischer sheds light on Abulhawa's reference to the Holocaust in comparison to the Nakba.

Other papers focus on the necessity of storytelling and its role in raising awareness about the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Norah Hasan Alqahtani analyzes the storytelling technique using Edward Said's concept of self-representation to emphasize the

importance of storytelling as a counternarrative to Zionist perspective. Sharing the same perspective, Nina Fischer and Kate Mitchell explain the role of fiction in rewriting the past and providing information about history in Aline Ohanesian's *Orhan's Inheritance* and Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. This understanding of the novel's political role is highlighted by Fatema Al Zahraa Shahwan who focuses on Abulhawa's depiction of al-Nakba and the role of Palestinian documentary novel in informing readers about historical facts. The theme of home and return is also important as explored in an M.A. thesis by Takreem Mohammad Abdallah who focuses on Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* and its adaptations by Boaz Groan and Susan Abulhawa, and by Faten Adi who examines the notions of diaspora, home, and return.

Mornings in Jenin has also attracted the attention of linguistic scholars. Khaled Al Kodimi focuses on Abulhawa's language to depict the tragedy, suffering, and oppression of displaced Palestinians while an M.A. thesis by Yasmin Kamel Al-Tarawah analyzes expressions of hate speech in the context of racial discrimination. Zayna Halis analyzes the embodied metaphors using Conceptual Metaphor Theory as an ecolinguistics framework to depict the relationship between the displaced Palestinian characters and their homeland. The translation of the novel into many languages has been analyzed; for example, A. A. Hamedani and Atieh ASADOLLAHI analyze the Persian translation through narrative theory and find that the translator's perspective influences the original text while Areej Allawzi and colleagues employ Mona Baker's narrative theory to examine the strategies used in translating the novel into Arabic and how the

translator modified some parts of the text to support her ideology. Shoroq Abu Arra analyzes the references to exile into the Arabic translation using post-colonial translation theory. These research papers show that translation can be biased to shape political stances. There are also ecocritical studies dealing with *Mornings in Jenin* such as an ecofeminist study carried out by Dina El-Hindi and B. AlTaher in which she addresses the relationship between Amal and the environment in Palestine. Also, Tareq Zuhair and Yousef Awad discuss the connection between the characters and their land with a focus on the depiction of trees and their role in emphasizing the identity of Palestinians. Similarly, a paper by M. Nasooha explores how Abulhawa's novels portray the deep connection between Palestinians and their land as a means of resilience and memory and the Zionists' procedures to erase Palestinian ecology and agricultural practices.

There are other studies that tackle different themes such as Lulwa Al Kalifa's study that holds a comparison between *Palace Walk* and *Mornings in Jenin* with a focus on the role of education and choice in empowering women. Also, the role of women specially mothers in the war between Palestine and Israel is the topic of Noora Badwan's M.A. thesis. Shifting the focus to resistance, Areen Khalifeh and Mohammed Jayyousi depict the resilience of Palestinian characters and their choice of peaceful means to resist oppression. Another study by Samar H. AlJahdali compares Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks* and *Mornings in Jenin* using Bakhtin's chronotope theory to portray Palestinian postcoloniality. The study provides an analysis of how time and space are represented under occupation. A study by A. LANASRI and P. M. B. BARKA examines Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and

Mornings in Jenin through chaos theory detecting the presence of order and meaning despite chaos and trauma.

The previous studies provide different interpretations of *Mornings in Jenin* through various critical frameworks. This rich body of scholarship on the novel shows its important influence as a literary, cultural, and political work. The significance of this paper lies in its adoption of an intersectional approach, specifically the matrix of domination, grounded in the work of Patricia Hill Collins. It attempts to address the different kinds of oppression, involving the intersection of gender, race, class, and other social markers, that characters experience amid the Palestinian Israeli conflict. The lives of Palestinians are shaped by power operating through four domains: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become a widespread term in academia in the twentieth century. It examines how gender, race, class, and nation affect one another and their impact upon the experiences of individuals (Collins "It's All in the Family" 62). It has been previously concerned with gender studies, and is now employed in different fields such as sociology, education, anthropology, psychology, political sciences, law, literature and health studies to address the issues of identity and injustice (Lutz 39). The origins of intersectionality can be traced back to the racism performed against minority women in the United States. The black and Latina feminist movements of the 1970s and early 1980s criticized the division between gender and ethnicity in women's lives besides asserting that feminism supported white women while

ignoring the needs of minority women. Thus, black lesbians formed a social group called the Combahee River Collective to tackle the different kinds of subordination that form interlocking oppressions (Atewologun 4). As a term, intersectionality was first coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, a professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Columbia University School of Law, and who is also the creator of Critical Race Theory (Grzanka 16). She wanted to shed light on the conditions of African American women in law, and how essential it was to tackle that law within the scope of gender and race discrimination (Atewologun 5).

Though intersectionality is a prominent term, there is no definite definition agreed upon (Azmitia, and Thomas 3). According to Patrick R. Grzanka:

Intersectionality is a conceptualization of the problem that attempts to capture both the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination. It specifically addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create background inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes—and the like. Moreover, it addresses the way that specific acts and policies create burdens that flow along these axes constituting the dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment. (17)

Put simply, Kathy Davis says, “Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (68). In addition, intersectionality, according to Davis, connects two main aspects of contemporary feminist thought. First, it delves into explaining the impact of race, class, and gender on the identity and life of women and their strive for autonomy in addition to targeting the marginalization of poor women and women of color within white, Western feminist doctrine. Feminist doctrine used ‘triple jeopardy’ to deal with class, race, and gender as categories of injustice that increase the vulnerability, marginalization, and subordination of individuals. Then after some time a shift took place concentrating on the fusion of these three categories and their influence on the social and material aspects of women’s lives besides change of power relations. Moreover, intersectionality was considered a suitable way to study how these categories influence one another by focusing on the idea of how race is gendered and how gender is racialized, which affects the structures of social class. Secondly, another school of feminist thought which is postmodern feminism digs deep into intersectionality; postmodern feminist theorists believe intersectionality to be helpful in analyzing binary systems and universal claims entrenched in modern Western philosophy and science. Schools of criticism which were influenced by poststructuralism such as postcolonialism, diaspora studies, and queer theory were all looking for other explanations rather than the fixed definitions of identity. Intersectionality and postmodernism share similar grounds in their belief of having

many dynamic identities. Similarly, intersectionality aligns with Foucault's concept of power emphasizing the changing nature of processes and the breaking down of categories that result in normalization and homogeneity (71).

The Matrix of Domination

Collins has done extensive research on intersectionality, and she makes a distinction between intersectionality and the matrix of domination. She introduces the matrix of domination, her original theory, in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990). It presents a postcolonial perspective on the different kinds of oppression that involve the intersection of gender, race, class, and other social markers. This theory has been established to empower and tackle the conditions of the marginalized and other groups "such as trafficked people, persons with disability, sexually deviant identities, transgender people, juvenile delinquents, welfare recipients, indigenous peoples, small entrepreneurs, residentially segregated citizens and migrants" (Limpangog 1). Collins explains intersectionality focuses on certain kinds of intersecting oppressions which cause injustice while the matrix of domination works on how these intersecting oppressions are organized in addition to the operation of power through structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains across different kinds of oppression (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 18). Each domain has a certain purpose: "The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues" (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 276).

Structural Domain of Power

The structural domain of power shows how society's institutions are established to strengthen the subordination of the marginalized as time passes. This domain focuses on the large interconnection of social institutions which have caused injustice due to the many kinds of exclusion based on race, class, and gender (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 277). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the social institutions are represented by the colonial state, Israel and its army, and Palestine's patriarchal society. The novel traces the beginning of the occupation of Palestine. Ari, Hasan's Jewish friend, explains, "Zionists have hordes of guns. They've recruited an army from shiploads of Jews arriving every day . . . They have armored cars and planes, even" (Abulhawa 22-23). Ein Hod, the village where Amal's family lives, is attacked by Israel though the day before the villagers prepare "a feast as a gesture of friendship and [their] intention to live side by side with them" (Abulhawa 28). Many men, women, and children are brutally attacked and killed in addition to the kidnapping of Amal's brother, Isamel. Abulhawa writes, "In a flash, Moshe snatched the child, tucked it in his army sack, and kept moving without looking back" (37). The villagers of Ein Hod are kicked out of their homes until they reach Jenin where a refugee camp is set up. The abduction of Isamel in addition to being dispossessed traumatizes the whole family, especially Dalia, the mother of Yousef, Amal and Isamel, and their life becomes a series of horrors. Abulhawa creates the link between Amal's family, the Palestinian family, and Moshe's family, the Israeli family, through the abduction of Isamel. Moshe gives Isamel to his childless wife, Jolanta, a Holocaust survivor to make up for the horror she witnessed at the hands of German men "polluting her body" (Abulhawa 36). The

security and welfare of the Israeli family, representing the powerful group, is established on the havoc of the Palestinian family, the weak group. Moshe is acting exactly like his Nazi oppressors with a Palestinian family that has fed him: "the Arab woman served lamb to Moshe and his comrades" (Abulhawa 36). His act forever hunts him until he dies. Alkodimi explains Abulhawa has created this link to use the abduction of Ismael/David as a symbol of Israel's occupation of Palestine, and that his reunion with Amal is a symbol of the possibility of Palestinians gaining back their land besides accepting the presence of Israelis (135). The dispossession of Palestinians is an example of structural power.

Structural power is also reflected in the economic system enforced by the Israeli army. Poverty is widespread in refugee camps. Palestinians are denied access to proper education and jobs. Yousef, Amal's elder brother, "could no longer travel to his work and gave up his post at Bethlehem University, accepting a teaching position at the UNRWA boys' school" (Abulhawa 107). Dalia's Bedouin family is another example of structural power highlighting patriarchy. Dalia does not care about traditions and customs; according to the Bedouins, she needs to be controlled and to drive the devil spirit out of her body. One Bedouin woman says, "Break her, beat her, teach her a lesson" (Abulhawa 14). Unfortunately, she is falsely accused of stealing a horse, and her father decides to punish her. She accepts the punishment rather than admitting knowing the owner of the horse, Darweesh, who later becomes her brother-in-law. The punishment is tying her to a chair in front of the whole village and burning the hand that stole the horse. Moreover, he threatens if she screams, he will burn the

other hand. A woman tries to stop him, but the father says, “My honor shall have no blemish. Step back, this is my right” (Abulhawa 15). Patriarchy is firmly entrenched in Bedouin tribes.

Disciplinary Domain of Power

The disciplinary domain of power organizes power through bureaucratic ranking and surveillance. Since bureaucracy has become a key aspect of modern social organization, the disciplinary domain becomes more important. Bureaucracy, both in capitalist and socialist systems, gains an increasing vital role in controlling populations along the lines of race, gender, and other different social indicators. This system is supremely effective in nourishing intersecting oppressions and concealing their influence (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 280-81). Thus, oppression would appear to be normal and accepted without questioning. In the novel, the disciplinary domain is seen through the curfews, checkpoints, and prisons established by the Israeli occupation army. The Palestinians are always watched: “FIVE ISRAELI SOLDIERS, FOUR on the ground, one in the watchtower, were manning a checkpoint near the village of Bartaa” (Abulhawa 104). One day, Amal is caught trespassing: “First one, then two more soldiers were upon me like hyenas and I shook with fear. They asked me endless questions, passing the stack of identity papers between them (Abulhawa 118), and though they allow her to leave, she is shot. Consequently, the bullet causes a scar in her abdomen which becomes a sign of disciplinary violence taking hold of her body. Intersecting oppression is clearly depicted in Amal’s case, a Palestinian Muslim woman. Therefore, she is vulnerable. Palestinian lives are managed and controlled through the disciplinary domain of power.

Hegemonic Domain of Power

The hegemonic domain of power operates through the beliefs, ideas, culture, and self-awareness of the marginalized. This domain works to support the oppression that takes place in the structural and disciplinary domains by controlling ideology and culture. Therefore, it “acts as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interaction (interpersonal domain)” (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 284). Another significant aspect of the hegemonic domain of power is to keep creating ideas that are accepted by both the oppressor and the oppressed to sustain the matrix of domination. Those who are in control create a set of ideas and beliefs and encourage their dissemination until they are accepted by everyone. This occurs through schools, religions, cultures, and history to legitimize the oppression of the marginalized. Collins further explains the progressive influence of mass media is the reason behind the fixed hegemonic beliefs about race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation because it manages intersecting oppressions (*Black Feminist Thought* 284). This is clearly highlighted in the novel when the United Nations decides to cover up the atrocities of the Israeli army in Jenin: “The official report of the United Nations, prepared by men who never visited Jenin and spoke to neither victim nor victimizer, concluded that no massacre had taken place. The conclusion was echoed in the U.S. headlines: ‘NO MASSACRE IN JENIN.’ ‘ONLY MILITANTS KILLED IN JENIN, SAYS ISRAEL’” (Abulhawa 317). However, many Palestinian civilians are murdered and arrested. Israel and America want to deceive the world about the savage killings of Palestinians, and that Israel is defending itself against armed Palestinians. Israel calls Palestinians terrorists to justify its fierce actions.

The hegemonic domain is not just significant in shaping and controlling others but in creating counter narratives to challenge the dominant ideas, beliefs, and culture. Therefore, it is a chance to empower the marginalized (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 285). The novel is a counter narrative to the dominant stereotype that was prevalent in the Western world many years ago which is Palestinians are terrorists and do not want to live in peace. It depicts the reality, struggle, suffering, and oppression of the Palestinians through the eyes of Amal and her family across four generations. Amal uses storytelling as a means of resistance to the hegemonic domain of power, and this was due to her father's teachings: "The land and everything on it can be taken away, but no one can take away your knowledge or the degrees you earn" (Abulhawa 60). She narrates her family's history to Sara, her American daughter, who after Amal's death tells the whole story on social media platforms. Collins stresses the importance of consciousness as an aspect of freedom in addition to the role of self-definition. She states consciousness is not static; it is in continuous development, and it is important for both individuals and communities. Each person responds in a different way to oppression and domination which is due to his/her personal experience and background including beliefs, incentives, and sentiments. It is nearly impossible to find two people sharing the same social position (*Black Feminist Thought* 285). This is highlighted in the novel through the characters' different responses to the Israeli oppression. For example, Amal's grandfather, Yehya, is angry, and he decides to disobey the orders of the Israeli soldiers which is not to return to Ein Hod. He does not use violence, but he embarks on a journey to his dear hometown: "Yehya had been spotted on his first trip by one of the

Jewish settlers, and when he returned, waiting soldiers had shot him for trespassing” (Abulhawa 48). His attachment to the land and nostalgia result in his death. Yehya’s son, Hasan who is Amal’s father, accepts their new status as refugees and responds in a peaceful way by “writing letters and negotiating with UN officials for basic necessities” (Abulhawa 49). Deep inside, he is ashamed of not being able to protect his family especially against the kidnapping of his child, Isamel. Dalia’s response is shaped by her inability to bear the consequences of the Israeli attack. She is traumatized and “learned to be a stoic mother, communicating the demands and tenders of motherhood with the various tempers of silence” (Abulhawa 52). Furthermore, after Hasan’s disappearance and then death, she loses her mind. Yousef’s response changes as he grows up as he faces torture throughout his life. When he was young and was given a gun, he could not shoot: “I cannot take the life of another. I am afraid of violating life. Afraid of losing mine. So I walk with the others, my arms high in surrender” (Abulhawa 100-101). After being exposed to torture in prison, he insists on revenge: “I am damaged, of no use to the people I love. I’ll die if I stay here. But something in me remains afire. Something that refuses to break, insists on a fight” (Abulhawa 106). He joins the Palestinian revolutionary fighters, a resistant movement, led by Yasser Arafat to stand up to Israel.

The life stories of these Palestinian characters are shaped by the cultural context they occupy. An individual is a part of many groups such as race, gender, religion, social status, and age which overlap and give the individual his/her distinct identity. The strongest groups are those with known history, geographical areas, and social institutions. Thus, an individual’s identity is influenced

by these factors. In addition, there is subjugated knowledge which is the knowledge and viewpoint the oppressed group gains from life experience. The powerful group wants to control the oppressed group not by issuing new rules but by controlling how they think. It wants to normalize its beliefs and ideas. However, the oppressed resist by holding onto their knowledge and culture (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 286). In the novel, the Israeli army tortures and murders Palestinians to silence them. They want Palestinians either to surrender and leave their land or die convincing them that there is no other way. Amal says, “We were existing somewhere between life and death, with neither accepting us fully” (Abulhawa 75). The Israeli army has created hell on earth for the Palestinians, but they courageously continue to stand up to them: “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” (Abulhawa 108). Martyrdom is Palestinians means of resistance.

Interpersonal Domain of Power

The interpersonal domain of power focuses on how oppression is performed through everyday interactions not just through structural and disciplinary domains. Probably subconsciously, power and oppression are enacted daily by individuals. The individuals maintain the subordination of others through daily routine and at the microlevel of social organizations. These practices are structured, known and repeated without consciously being aware of their occurrences. The lives of individuals are shaped by different systems of power. If power is

enacted every day, it can be encountered or resisted. As these are personal interactions, different ways of resistance take place (Collins *Black Feminist Thought* 287). Abulhawa presents examples showing the interpersonal domain of power as in the violent encounter between the two brothers, Yousef and David, who does not know he is Palestinian and named Isamel. An Israeli soldier tells David about a resemblance between him and a Palestinian citizen, and that he must see him. As soon as David sees Yousef, he gets angry. Abulhawa writes, "David slapped the Arab. He struck him next with the butt of his rifle. He knew not why, but now he could not stop. He kicked the Arab's groin repeatedly. He did it again and again until *that* Arab—*that* face—was unconscious" (105-106). Isamel/David contributes to the oppression of his people. This savage encounter at the checkpoint is an example of how state power is displayed in a personal familial context. The Israeli uniform and Zionist ideology overcome the bond of brotherhood. Another example is when the Israeli army led by Ariel Sharon attacks the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, where Yousef's wife, Fatima, and daughter, Falasteen, live. Yousef cries, "They ripped my Fatima's belly with a knife! . . . They killed my babies!" (Abulhawa 227). Yousef is going to lose his mind and promises to take revenge:

I am the husband of Fatima, father of two. 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. Demonic wrath bubbles in my veins. May it lurk after I am gone. May you taste its vinegar.

I seek vengeance, nothing more. Nothing less. And I shall have it. And you shall see no mercy. (Abulhawa 241)

Despite his anger, he does not carry out his revenge; his kind and loving nature prevents him from taking the lives of others. The bombing of the American embassy in Lebanon is not carried out by him though it will be said he is the terrorist responsible for the attack: "I'll live this pain but I'll not cause it. I'll eat my fury and let it burn my entrails, but death shall not be my legacy" (Abulhawa 321). Being a Palestinian Muslim man makes him the target of persecution and imprisonment by the Israeli forces. He spends the rest of his life hiding and moving from one country to another.

Another example of the interpersonal domain of power at the microlevel of social organization in the novel is when Amal is harassed by her friend's ex-husband, Milton, in America at a bar. The news of the bombing of the American embassy is on television. Thus, the people are all ears, and then Milton angrily shouts in the direction of Amal, "Fucking terrorists! . . . I think we ought to carpet bomb the whole fucking place. Get rid of every last sand-nigger" (Abulhawa 238). As a response, Amal cannot control her anger and punched him in the nose which resulted in her arrest, but "Milton refused to press charges, dismissing [her] as a 'psycho bitch'" (Abulhawa 238). Throughout her life, this is the only time that Amal uses violence despite her exposure to a series of tortures, and this is because Yousef is the suspect of bombing the American embassy. She knows her brother well and is sure of his innocence.

Amal's life comes to an end in Palestine after three decades of exile. Upon the wish of Sara, her daughter, she happily travels back to Jenin despite the heavy burden she feels since she lost most of her family members and the traumatic experience she has

gone through. This attachment to her homeland could be described in Lauren Berlant's terms of 'cruel optimism' which is "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic" (24). People remain attached to a dream or something they desire which in fact could harm their well-being. This attachment is cruel because if one forsakes his/her dream, it is going to be more disastrous than if he/she seeks to achieve it. The journey to achieve that dream is what gives life its meaning (24). Amal holds onto her dream of returning to Palestine though it is stressful, but if she gives up this dream, she will be haunted by her loss of identity and purpose in life. It is this cruel attachment to her homeland that results in her death. Abulhawa writes, "This woman had survived an Israeli bullet in her youth and died by the one intended for her child" (316). Though Amal is in danger and about to die, she puts herself in others' shoes: "He blinked hard. Her stare made him uneasy. He had killed before, but never while looking his victim in the eyes. Amal saw that, and she felt his troubled soul amid the carnage around them" (Abulhawa xiii). This act of violence performed by the Israeli soldier shows the improbability of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis if systemic racial violence prevails. Unfortunately, empathy fails in vanquishing the structural, disciplinary, and hegemonic powers of occupation.

Conclusion:

The magic of *Mornings in Jenin* lies in the spell it casts over the reader. Its striking impact remains long after the novel ends. It is a heart wrenching novel that acts as a wakeup call for the world to see the atrocities of the Israelis. Though the novel was written in 2006, it seems as if it is written today. Israel is using the same inhumane strategy of torture, persecution, and murder since 1948. The novel delves into the lives of Abulheja family documenting their displacement, terror, trauma, exile, survival, and resistance amid the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Abulhawa succeeds in exposing the dehumanization of Palestinians emphasizing their precarity and vulnerability. They are human beings who deserve the attention and concern of the world. Though the focus of the novel is on the traumatic experience of Abulheja family, specifically Amal, and which has been the focus of many research papers, the aim of this paper has been to analyze intersecting oppressions that characters confront. Collins's matrix of domination is applied, and the novel is analyzed through the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power which show how gender, race, ethnicity are reshaped by violence resulting in overlapping forms of domination and resistance. The matrix of domination is seen in the lives of the Abulheja family. Power operates on multiple levels from political forces to intimate personal relationships. The Palestinian characters are oppressed by Israel, the colonial state, patriarchy, and the economic system. In addition, their lives are managed and controlled by Israel. Furthermore, they are forced to accept oppression in their daily interactions. The characters experience all these forces at the same time. So, resistance is represented in confronting different kinds of oppression. Finally, *Mornings in Jenin* gives voice to the voiceless.

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