

**BIO VIOLENCE AND INFRASTRUCTURAL POWER:  
A CRITICAL STUDY OF KHALIEF'S *MY FIRST AND ONLY  
LOVE***

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**Abstract**

The fractured, contested and fragile territories of Palestine hints towards the management and protection of Palestinian lives through biopolitical measures and ends up with hegemonic measures of controlling and manipulating bodies through technological surveillance and bioviolence. This paper encapsulates the theories of Mann and Foucault to internalize and contextualize oppressive power systems in Palestinian daily life through literary cannon. The study utilizes Khalief fiction as a sample for political apparatus to employ on Palestinian fiction adopting Qualitative analysis of Miles and Huberman. The text navigates through time, spanning decades, and explores how family, politics, and friendship are influenced by bio violence and war, questioning whether collective memory is immutable. Khalifeh took stand for her nation to give it strength and value. The research manifests the struggles of Khalief characters during mass causalities and social disruption caused by prime players of bioweapons in Palestinian villages. The state ability to regulate bodies intensified after 1948 where Khalief dramatizes Palestinian social world presenting restrictions of Nidal, Rabi and their uncle to regain their self esteem and right to live in their land. The biopolitical pressures from multiple directions are affecting characters lives shifting them into *biopolitical subjects* of Israeli governance.

**Keywords:** *Autonomous Power, Bioviolence, Foucault, Khalief, Mann, Palestinian Fiction*

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### 1. Bio Violence and Infrastructural Power in Contemporary Palestinian Literature

The consequence of modern biopower are seen in the lives of Palestinians since 1948. The Palestinian nation has been facing a dilemma of biopolitical punishment and siege for many years. Grinberg (2013) argues that the first intifada opened up a political space for recognition and negotiations. However, with the arrival of the second intifada, there is nothing that remains but violence and oppression. The First Intifada delineated the boundaries of the Israeli state and envisioned a Palestinian state, whereas the Second Intifada obscured them. The Palestinian resistance faces a dilemma: it is suppressed when resorting to violence, and overlooked when engaging in diplomatic conversation. With the absence of established borders and the unequal power dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians, global intervention is necessary, both through exerting pressure on Israel and deploying peacekeeping forces. *Wild Thorns* by Khalifeh adeptly confirms the plight of Palestine by saying that the occupation has had a significant impact on the socio-political and economic aspects of Palestinian life, making it increasingly challenging for them to thrive in their land (Qualey, 2023). Both Palestinians residing within and outside the Palestinian territories encounter numerous difficulties and adversities in their daily lives due to this siege (Abdelrazek, 2005).

Israel's discriminatory practices towards Palestinians, including the ongoing settlements, land appropriation, and enforced segregation in Gaza and the West Bank, have led to comparisons with apartheid and settler-colonialism. The systematic discrimination against Palestinians, along with various inhumane acts committed by Israel, serves as a stark reminder of apartheid. Since gaining control of the land, Israel has actively sought to displace the indigenous population, replacing them with Jewish immigrants from different parts of the world. This includes home demolitions, land theft, water appropriation, and property seizures. Additionally, the destruction of trees, night raids, and intimidation of children are all part of a deliberate strategy to erase an entire civilization from the land in order to establish an exclusively Jewish State. "Not only in its socio-political structure but also in its ethnic composition" (Pappe, 2006, p. 15). According to a report provided by HRW (2021): More than 2,000 civilians have been killed in military operations launched by the Israeli army in Gaza since 2008, including deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian structures. Additionally, Israeli forces have regularly opened fire on Palestinian protesters and others who have not posed a threat to life near the fence separating Gaza and Israel, killing 214 protesters in 2018 and 2019 alone. The excessive and disproportionate use of force has been a consistent practice for over a decade in exerting control over the Palestinian population. Palestinians have endured various forms of brutal violence, such as torture, persecution, periodic killings, and forceful expulsion. From demolishing homes, making arrests, and conducting air raids to physical assaults, attacks on Palestinians have become a daily occurrence (Sayegh, 2023). These atrocious acts of

violence are sometimes likened to 'mowing the lawn', insinuating that Palestinians are unwanted nuisances that must be eradicated. Ironically, Israel often finds ways to justify these brutal actions against the Palestinian people. The Israeli hegemony seeks to legitimize occupation by trying to disconnect Palestinians from their homeland and territory. This strategy involves implementing collective punishment, enforcing closures, demolishing homes, and carrying out administrative detentions. Nevertheless, Palestinians do not passively accept the Israeli hegemonic tactics (Aggarwal, 2022). In essence, settler-colonialism is a system that operates based on the very logic of elimination of the indigenous, as defined by Wolfe (2006).

“Settler-colonialism is a structure, not an event, which strives for the dissolution of native societies and erasure of indigeneity” (pp. 388-393). During that Siege, the whole community is being erased and removed from their homes, either by killing or dispersing and shifting them from their homes to the refugee camps. In Palestine, state violence is no longer channeled through the prism of law, even a law as corrupted as that of an occupying regime. However, it would be incorrect to assume that the violence directed towards Palestinians is unfiltered.

The current body of literature suggests that the First and Second Intifadas provide insights into future options for the Palestinian struggle by examining the dynamics of resistance, violence, and politics in the Israeli-Palestinian context. The First Intifada (1987-1983) culminated in mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in September 1993. This recognition was achieved through a strategy of popular mass protest, non-violent civil resistance, and unity among Palestinians under a clandestine executive committee representing all parties (Beauchamp, 2018). The recognition and negotiations during the First Intifada were facilitated by the political construction of legitimate resistance, which sought recognition and opened up political space for representation (Darraj, 2008) Dawash's *I belong there* highlights Arabism and injustices upon Palestinians (Masood, 2022). The First Intifada demarcated the borders of the Israeli state and the imagined Palestinian state, setting the stage for diplomatic negotiations and mutual recognition. In contrast, the Second Intifada (2000-2005) spiraled into escalating violence, leading to a stalemate characterized by unilateral moves and the breakdown of diplomatic efforts. The violence of the Second Intifada overshadowed political negotiations and recognition of legitimate claims. The author highlights that without international pressure on Israel, the Palestinians have been unable to achieve concrete political results, leading to a cycle of ambivalent strategies oscillating between resistance and violence (Grinberg, 2013). The analysis of the reactions to the First and Second Intifadas provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for the Palestinian struggle, emphasizing the importance of balancing resistance, politics, and international engagement to achieve meaningful recognition and negotiations in the future. The rich and

diverse body of Palestinian fiction has emerged as a powerful medium for exploring the complex and often harrowing realities faced by the Palestinian people. At the heart of this literary tradition lies a profound engagement with the subjectification of Palestinian bodies, as authors grapple with how the Palestinian experience is shaped by political, social, and cultural forces that seek to control and define the Palestinian subject (Ashcroft, 2004).

Middle Eastern nations are currently grappling with challenges such as colonial legacies, imperial ambitions, globalization, and defensive modernization as they transition from a period of national independence and anti-colonial struggles to one of liberation and democratic rule (Alkadry, 2002). Fiction responds to state violence by exploring its impact on individuals and society, political imprisonment disrupts the generic and thematic concerns of texts, and fiction delves into the fear of being perceived as complicit with the authorities. Khalifeh advances the notion of power over native bodies by expressing her grief and frustration due to the seizure of Israel. "Our life under Occupation cannot be described in one word. But if I were to do so, I think that no word would serve so well as *tension*. Tension inside, tension outside" (Khalifeh, 1984, p. 26). Priyanka & Koudur (2016) reveal that Kahlief, with her contemporary writers Darwish and Kanafani, unveils the horrors faced by the Palestinian body. They claimed that she had depicted the challenging truths of Palestinian existence under the IO (Israeli Occupation). She has addressed significant political matters such as displacement, defiance, persecution, and aggression, which are central to the current Palestinian situation. In this way, this occupation assumes the responsibility for governing the occupied territory and exercises control over the inhabitants through the exertion of power. This form of occupation functions similarly to a traditional sovereign state in modern times. "In former times, enemy territory occupied by a belligerent was in every point considered his State Property, so that he could do what he liked with it and its inhabitants" (Oppenheim, 1952, p. 432).

IO exhibits characteristics of colonialism, establishing a dynamic between the occupiers and the occupied reminiscent of the colonizer/colonized and oppressor/oppressed binary. It bears a striking resemblance to European colonialism in regions such as South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Zionism, a Jewish political movement, draws inspiration from European colonial models, laying the groundwork for the State of Israel. The establishment of a Jewish Homeland on land inhabited by indigenous Palestinians mirrors the concept of 'settler colonies'. Israeli Jews, empowered by IO, exercise authority over Palestinians in the occupied territories, rendering them powerless. The regime enforces strict administrative control over the population, overseeing currency, import-export trade, labour mobility, and the management of all productive resources, including land and water. Identity cards of natives were confiscated and replaced with colour-coded ones in the occupied territories (Maalouf, 2000).

Educational institutions in the West Bank were shut down during the occupation, with the curriculum being altered to promote the naturalization of the Jewish state. History books have been revised to deny the existence of Palestinians, replacing Arab historical texts with Jewish narratives in schools and universities.

## **2. Demographic Manipulation and Politics of Location in *My First and Only Love***

The cultural and physical extermination in Palestine through *Genocide–ecocide nexus* (Dinc, Turk, 2025) functions as a *tool of systematic oppression* (Crook & Short, 2014). The Story navigates through the lives of different characters shifting them from one place to another to safeguard their lives from *biopolitical pressures* of Israeli settler colonial governance. The text highlights surroundings of Ramallah and other villages where Palestinians world is configured by *infrastructural power* demolishing buildings, roads, streets, creating checkpoints, borders, and other disciplinary measures not only to restrict movement but reverting the whole infrastructure of Palestine. The spatialized system of Israeli domination uses logistical and non-logistical obstacles, constant violence and reorganize everyday life of Qahtan and other families living in the area. Israeli imperial cartography maintains the status of Palestine as a territorial space of control and ownership. The distressing experiences of Palestinian Arabs suffered from forced displacement during the 1940s, systematic targeting of orchards and greenhouses highlights *colonialism and capitalism as structural drivers of genocide and ecocide* (Dinc, Turk, 2025). The devastation represents a calculated act of ecocide that intensifies the current severe famine in Palestine, reflecting a broader trend of systematically denying Palestinians essential resources necessary for their survival. The war constrained nations' willingness to volunteer to defend their territories. Regardless of their preferences, every nation is bound by this obligation. Each individual must contribute through their lives, financial resources, homes, or families. Every nation possesses the right to establish its sovereignty; this should not come at the cost of the lives of others (Ahram, 2023; Dinc, 2021, 2022; Dinc et al., 2021; Eklund et al., 2021; Eklund & Dinc, 2024).

The non contagious and fractured landscape is also presented as unified, imaginary and alternative construction to defy the system of Israeli control by Khalief. For Khalief the politics of location linked with exile, displacement and aspirations of returning to native place. She presents evils of infrastructural power by showcasing not only public life but the terrain of love relationships where meetings and conversations are restrained due to long curfews and checkpoints separating one street from another, surveillance strains intimacy and love bonds are shattered because of occupation. “They want to control the Suez Canal and the oil...maintain their authority” (p. 144). The settler’s agenda regarding cartography and the exclusion of natives is dominant in Khalief’s work than in Abulhawa’s displacement and exile. A new kind of death emerged in: “The collaborators informed the British of his location; they came with a huge army, about three thousand soldiers,

reinforced with tanks, cavalry, snipers, and the Arab Ground Police” (p.155). Israeli tanks are demolishing everything without distinction between the innocent and the victim. Hasna strives for the resistant fighters and explains that eliminating natives is one of the organising principles of settler colonial society, rather than a superseded occurrence. They are doing everything to eliminate the natives from their places.

The death of al-Husseini due to Israeli bombardment is a symbol of loss and enormous destruction: “His death was linked to the loss of Jerusalem and the loss of Qastal...whole Palestine” (p. 180). Palestinians are slowly moving towards a death zone due to blockades and explosions.

Qahtan’s narrative is the narrative of Palestine, destroyed and demolished by settler colonists. The fall of Zawata, an agricultural hub of Palestine: “there was nothing left but flies, stone quarries” (p.58). The settler colonial regime has shifted the whole infrastructure of Palestine for its settlements in the area. The grandmother: “There is no power and no strength save in God” (p.46) affirms the upcoming danger. The expression: “We heard a loud explosion from the south...and fell in pieces” (p.67). Palestinians are in a war situation, and this war has generated disconcertment and disquiet in them, changing the *perspective* through *psychological discursiveness* (Ramzan et al, 2023). The army had complete discipline under the oppressive regime, considering the *population as a unit of control* (Rabinow,1997, p.73): “dark cavities and holes that looked like the mouths of mythical beasts” (p.68).

In Zawata, an old villager addresses the devastating measures taken by Israelis to capture the villages and sketches the condition of villagers: “They lost the land, they had no work, and they were hungry” (p. 61). He describes the necropolitical economic system where only wealthy Jews hold money, and they have snatched the only source of the villagers, the land. The *systemic assault on the web of life* is disturbing *ecological and cultural existence* (Crook et al., 2018; Crook & Short, 2014; Dunlap, 2018b, 2021; Lindgren, 2018; Short, 2016):

He saw the tractor pull out a tree by the roots and throw it near other trees on the ground, looking like corpses, their roots turned upward toward the sky...old man was wailing with a rattle in his throat, saying, The olive trees, the olive trees!” (p.64).

These war machines are not only involved in the deterritorialization of Palestinian land, but with this cartographic effect, they are distorting their culture and civilisation: “Come and see this disaster! The olives, the olives!” (p. 64) The *sacred* olive symbol of care, according to (The Land Research Centre – Al Haq,2019), exists no more. The case of Zawata: “we heard the planes fly over Zawata and the mountain tops” (p. 67). This is a strong, organised surveillance system of the oppressive coloniser who controls every movement of the colonised. The suffocating siege, total closure of boundaries, and aerial

surveillance (Hajjar, qtd. in Parks and Kaplan, 2017: pp. 59–88) foreground the suffering war has inflicted on Palestinians. However, for Foucault, governmentality pertains to the organisation of resources and strategies; it involves using various tactics to structure circumstances in a manner that enables the attainment of specific objectives through a defined set of means (Foucault, 1991, p.95):

Their dogs are as huge as donkeys; believe me, their canines shine like rasps. Each rasp is an inch long, and their saliva drips. They sniff around them as if they are mad. They are certainly mad. (p. 108)

Yasmeen does not want a young boy to be a victim of Jewish dogs. *War machines* are defined by their ability to transform, adjust and alter their roles based on the situation, as noted by *Medium* (2025). In the context of Palestine, this could encompass a range of strategies, including targeted assassinations and the demolition of infrastructure, aimed at asserting control over the populace (Mbembe, 2019). The British have supported Jews in every step: “they gave the Jews tanks, armoured vehicles, heavy cannons, and aeroplanes. They gave them total access to the port of Tel Aviv” (p. 203). Power is exercised through war machines and the plundering of the earth and bodies. Khalief satirically posits: “The smell of bullets hid the smell of bodies” (p. 283). The state of Palestinian bodies could not be visualised by the world, even in their miserable state. The text exemplifies: “I would be left alone with the bodies, and...I hope I die” (p. 289). The dual injustice of exile and occupation could not break the will of a people bent on achieving freedom, dignity and redemption of history as presented in the story. Although almost all the characters face dire consequences for their struggle for their home country, they continue to march towards freedom.

#### Discursive Framing of Palestinians in Khalief’s Fiction

The state coldly governs the bodies and the infrastructure of Palestine. The *ecologically induced genocide* (Dunlap, 2021, 2022; Kosek, 2006) corroborates deliberate exploitation of the life worlds of Palestinians.

(political acts) and the cycle of violence provoked by Israeli silent expansion over the OPT reveal the “aspect of reducing an entire nation to the homo sacer condition, by submitting it to a network of written and unwritten regulations that removes its autonomy as members of a political community” (Paulo, 2003, p.144). Khalief presents destructive effects of biopolitical layered system which overwhelms the agency of Palestinian individuals. The *only way out is violence* “*The colonizers had taken over everything that belonged to the colonized*” (Rodrigo n.p). Khalief’s fiction serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle faced by Palestinians, who have endured decades of violence at the hands of the Israeli government.

Foucault's (1967) biopower encompasses the idea that the state seeks to manage and regulate the population as a whole, not just individuals. This includes controlling birth

rates, public health measures, and other aspects of the collective well-being. Biopower operates through disciplinary power, which focuses on individual bodies, and regulatory power, which governs the population. Foucault argued that biopower is not solely about control, but also about shaping and producing specific subjects. The state uses biopower to create and enforce norms and standards of behaviour, health, and citizenship, shaping individuals to fit within these parameters. Through *thanato juridical logic* Israel governs Palestinians (Ghanim, 2008; Gordon, 2008; Mbembe, 2003, 2019). Before 1948, British colonizers were overpowering Palestinian bodies by controlling their means of production, transportation, and the economy, adding on (Zureik, 2001; Foucault, 1954), the study argues that OPT is involved in biopolitical practices of control. Umm Nayef's comment: "People are exhausted, our children are scattered in the mountains, the prisons are overflowing" (p. 10) demonstrates the management of population. Foucault's surveillance model is appropriate for Asira people. They are observed from everywhere and decided to live in caves to avoid encountering colonial state forces. Yasmeen narrates the loss experienced by people around: "the barricades, the closures ... and Israel demolishing Abu Hamdan's house. Nablus was not what it used to be" (p. 45). The mayor and the secretary hope that the government is working for their improvement in education by building a new school and mosque in the area. The writer draws attention to economic modernization, where local elites are directly involved in foreign capital and play a role in the dispossession and modernization of culture: "What use were the mosque and the schools to those who had no land to feed them and no water to quench their thirst and no mayor to defend them?" (p. 65).

The primary concern of biopolitical management is to generate a procedure of control based on the normalization of judgment and the central strategy for expanding power (Rabinow, 1997): "The British and the Germans, in the name of the law... confiscate the farm and give it to the Jews" (p.100). Yasmeen observes her environment and finds out the tool of watching from above, which Foucault named the *panoptical model*, used to watch over subjects from everywhere. Yasmeen called it *markaba*: "I had told you, neighbour, how the markaba is higher...saw the markaba...and a soldier standing in the open section" (p. 105). The soldier stands outside for protection, but becomes the reason for restriction. The phrase *to protect civilians* serves to justify the valuation of human life within a restricted biopolitical framework, centred on the ambiguous status of the civilian, who may be perceived as either living or deceased in the context of Palestinian warfare: "We heard shooting and smelled gunpowder. They left, they disappeared" (p. 111). The agenda of governing civilians through protection involves the *biopolitics of discrimination* (Emerson, 2019) and appropriation. The horrible condition of small merchants in the city due to blockades confirms:

Due to frequent closures in the city and the barriers...the closures were against the law as was the closure of the alley for many days on the pretext of pursuing terrorists...they undertook searches, got entangled in fights, threw sound bombs, light bombs, and tear gas canisters...there were also the bullets and the markaba...making the city like the skeleton of a fish that a greedy cat had eaten, and leaving people dumbfounded (p. 121).

Nidal's consciousness from the nightmare of the fall of Palestine and realisation of the present holds Arendt's (1975, p. 475) "to be uprooted is to have no place in the world": "We have now passed the year 2000, but we still live in the era of siege. It was them yesterday and it is us today" (p. 299). Levinas reiterates common Zionist themes while focusing on *Framing Palestinians*, including the metaphysical Indigeneity, the transformation of the desert by the Jewish state of Israel, and the assertion that Palestinians do not truly exist, arguing that the identity of Palestinians emerged from the interaction between Arabs and British colonialism, as well as Zionist settler colonialism. Violence manifests through the negation of Palestinian identity, the removal of Palestinians from their historical context, or the denial of their existence.

Israel has unlawfully occupied both the West Bank and Gaza, exercising near-total control over these regions. For Mbembe (2019, p.44), it is "a dynamic of frenzied destruction whose essence lies in transforming the lives of Palestinians into a heap of ruins". It manages essential infrastructure, including roads, building permits, and water rights, while also controlling the movement of Palestinians both within and beyond the borders of the West Bank. Nidal and Rabi represent Hall's (1993) *constructed identity* through *dominant ideology*. Both consider their lives like scraps of paper demolished by state mechanisms, so easily dispersed by the wind. The calculation of destruction: "Your son...between life and death" (p. 97), "What a catastrophe! We are lost!" (p.97).

### **3. Body as a Locus of Sovereign and Infrastructural Power /Recursive System of Power**

Foucault (1978) determines power as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and constitute their organisation" (p. 92). Foucault's (1978) triple hypothetical dislodging manages an examination of government that offers a perspective on power that centres either on agreement or on brutality. It assists with separating power and control and explains the relations between legislation and morals. Foucault sees radicalism as a particular specialty of oversight that should be recognised within the political universe of discipline and the universe of sway. The idea of governmentality accepts the meaning of government as the activity of coordinated political power by a country or state. It grows to incorporate people's dynamic assent and eagerness to partake in their administration. It recommends that state administration is just one type of oversight, and that the terms state and government are not interchangeable.

At the centre of Foucault's image of present-day disciplinary society are three essential control procedures: *progressive perception, normalising judgment, and assessment*. By and large, command over individuals (power) can be accomplished just by noticing them. In this way, for instance, the layered columns of seats in an arena make it simple for observers to see, and watchmen or surveillance cameras filter the crowd. An ideal perception arrangement would permit one gatekeeper to see everything (Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon). Since this is not typically imaginable, there is a requirement for transfers of onlookers/beholders, progressively requested, through whom information is transmitted from lower to higher levels.

### 3.1 The Idea of Biopolitics

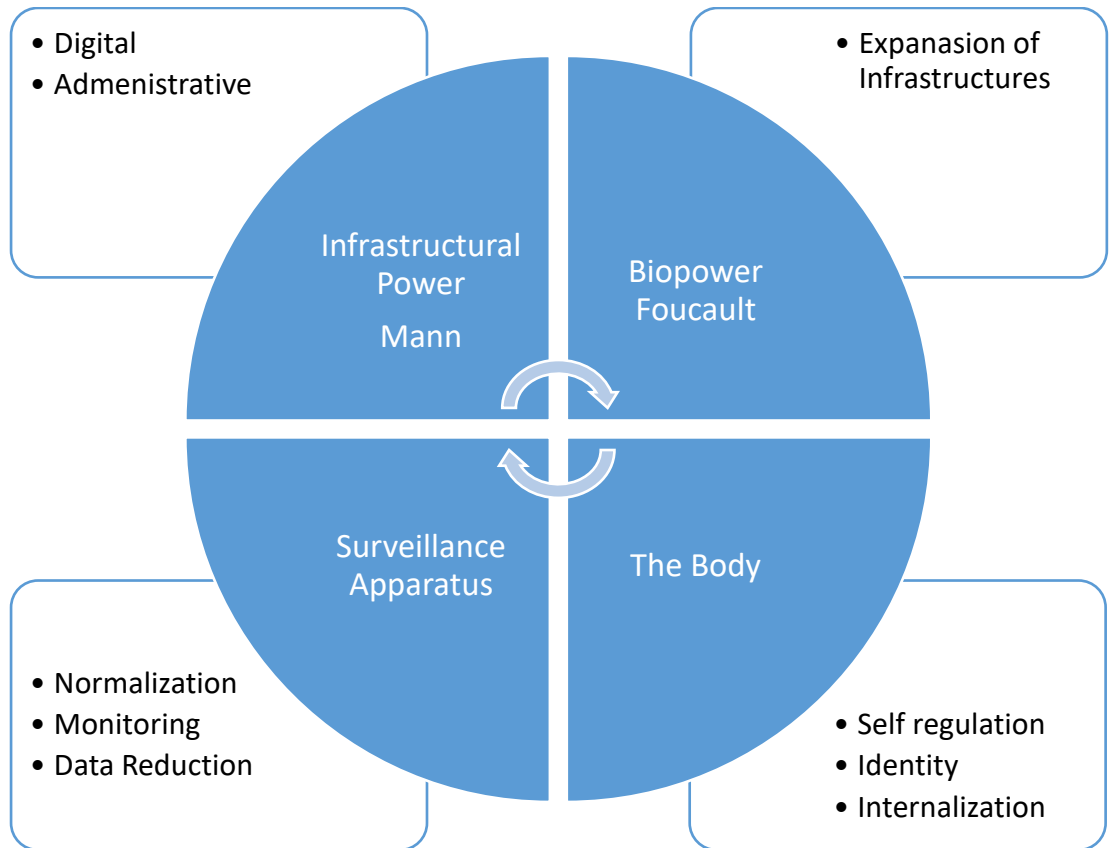
The term biopolitics refers to the methods modern states employ to regulate their citizens through various institutions, policies, and practices aimed at overseeing life. Foucault's analysis of biopolitics is chiefly articulated in *Society Must Be Defended* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. The core concepts are described (M.H. Walker, 2023):

- **Governmentality:** A form of governance transcends conventional sovereignty, concentrating on the population and its biological attributes.
- **Disciplinary Power:** The power structures that manage individual bodies through institutions like schools, hospitals, and prisons.
- **Biopower:** The management of populations through diverse interventions and regulatory frameworks.

According to Foucault, biopolitics and biopower represent the anatomico-political governance of the human body, which is regulated through disciplinary measures. "Biopolitics is how modern governance structures sustain and multiply life, to put this life in order" (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). Therefore, biopolitics is analysed and understood as a unique form of governing. Life is like a black box that must be watched rather than subjected to disciplinary restraints. Foucault's consideration of these subjects contrasts the concept of the Sovereign, a traditional rule or right to kill the masses to regulate their behaviours according to the need and desire of the hegemon. This rule is historically based on the deduction rule (M.A. Peters, 2020). It comprised the option to suitably a part of the nation's economy, for instance by imposing taxes on items, labour, and products, or by requesting a piece of the subjects' time, strength, and, ultimately, life itself. The clearest types of such power were the commitment to take up arms in the sovereign's name and the burden of capital punishment for conflicting with his will. However, Foucault guarantees that the West has undergone a significant change in its force components since the seventeenth century. Insightful and vicious sovereign power has been continuously supplemented and somewhat supplanted by biopower, which is a form of power that exerts a positive influence on life, "that endeavours to administer, optimise, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (1976, 1978, p. 137).

Foucault (1978) emphasizes the distinctive nature of power, how it operates, and its effect on people. The Panopticon model became the first to function with other institutions as a mechanism, as it automates and depersonalizes power. Power's foundation is not solely in an individual but in a coordinated arrangement of bodies, surfaces, lights, and gazes; an organization whose internal mechanisms create the relationship in which individuals are caught up (p. 202). Foucault illustrates this conception of power, where discipline does not require any specific apparatus or institution to be enforced. However, it has become so embedded in culture that it is now nearly impossible to eliminate. Bureaucracies play a role in this process, as does the facelessness of the bureaucrat. This depersonalization is based on the belief that power resides in the machine, not in the operator or human. This diffuse form of power controls people and fosters that paranoid feeling of subjugation and powerlessness (Atkinson, 2008).

Mann's infrastructural power (2008) encapsulates state 's capacity to control and implement decisions through complex networks of communication and territorial control. Those who control the societies try to manipulate their resources of power and create distributive power from their collective power. To carry out different policies this power do not rely on despotic power rather create complex cooperation in bureaucracies and infrastructures.



### 3.2. Laboratories of Pain and Evisceration of Palestinians' Lives

Palestinian territories are currently *authentic models of exception* (B. Sahd, 2015) where sovereignty works as a *method of control* (Ruiz, 2007).

According to (Du Bios,1903) individual self-survival is not possible in the world without understanding of *Other* and diminishing him for his sake. The novel is replete with Palestinians as deplorable beings killed and hacked for the survival of Israelis. Yiftachel (2006) calls Palestine “Creeping Apartheid” (p.167) while Agamben (2007) named it *Acampisa*. (Disciplined place through law of exception) Arendt (Sing, 2020) considered it a *camp* where *everything is possible*. The concept of siege has broadly been interpreted within the context of conflict as a rhetorical tool for shaping and portraying the present stage of the Palestine (Gaza) occupation. However, *siege* holds significance beyond mere rhetoric; the restriction and isolation of Gaza form a political strategy that integrates certain fundamental aspects of traditional military sieges while improving and adapting these aspects for a biopolitical era (Winter 2015).

The absolute sovereignty considers Palestinians *primarily as waste and substance of cyst* (Griffiths, 2022). The *management of flows and norms* (Foucault, 1975, p.76,1997) through biopolitical reasoning reinforces control over Palestinians. “My grandmother continued to observe the situation with a stiff, icy look, as if she had lost the ability to speak” (p. 97).

The massive artillery and aerial bombardment with an unprovoked attack on innocent villagers delineates the troubles of living in heterotopia (Foucault, 1967).

Lemkin (1944) explains two phases of genocide: first, the *destruction of the oppressed national pattern*, and second, the *imposition of the oppressor national pattern* (p. 74). Hence, the invasion is not a single event but a structure or guiding principle for the colonial project (Woolf,2006, p. 388; Moses,2010, p.9). This section seeks to explore the mechanisms, institutions, and conceptual frameworks that are employed in the creation of death-worlds and the formation of individuals intended for death. Life and living beings are at the heart of political battles and economic strategies involving modifying and controlling them. This power seizes life and its objects by configuring the conditions of abandonment and exceptionality for Palestinian people (Beaumont, 2014). This section focuses on how *My First and Only Love*, configures patterns of power, and articulates Palestinian narratives of disposability.

As Kanwal (2019) highlights, the issue of deaths through war machines in Palestine is increasing day by day and killing more people in Palestine: “The number of victims continued to increase...The intensity of the attacks, the killings and the number of planes” (p.9). The pro-Israeli lobby, which exhibits bias (Waxman, 2010; Cook, 2019; Saleem, 2015), has led to what is described as *the mechanised destruction* of the Palestinian community, executed by one of the most technologically advanced and "diplomatically shielded militaries in the history of mankind" (Saleem, 2015: n.p.). Miller’s insights regarding this racialised perception of Muslims are particularly relevant concerning Palestinians, who are always deemed criminal for their actions that are perpetually envisioned as both imminent and inherent to their identities. The preemptive governance has established an extended logic of incitement that criminalises and materialises the perceived aspirations and imaginations of racialised Muslims, who may provoke future violent actions by others (Parks & Kaplan, 2017, p. 129).

The term *war machines*, particularly in the context of Palestine indicates that modern conflicts are frequently conducted by non-state entities or groups that operate under the pretence of state authority, targeting populations that lack their governmental structures.

### **3.3. Persistence Of Silenced Toponymic Landscapes in Nidal’s Life**

The body is redefined as a political entity in settler-colonial regimes. It serves as a battleground for reshaping the power dynamics between the coloniser and the colonised,

as seen in Nidal's character. Butler's (2004) redefinition of body, in the context of the Israeli military, which devalues the lives and deaths of Palestinians, viewing them as insignificant and unworthy of mourning or empathy, reflects Nidal's story of living in a concentration camp.

Butler's (2004, p.62) *executive power*, which combines sovereignty and governmentality to create a lawless form of power, is expressed through the character of Nidal. Nidal Qahtan, the protagonist and the youngest member of the Palestinian family, witnesses her relatives facing off against British and Zionist occupiers. She observes the steady rise of unlawful Jewish immigration, the appropriation of land, and the betrayal of the Qahtan family (p.23). The characters crafted by Khalifeh grapple with the urgency of preserving their endangered homeland while striving to maintain their everyday lives. One of Nidal's uncles leads a group of freedom fighters, while another engages in the struggle through his writing. Nidal is introduced in her early 70s as a resilient painter who returns to Nablus after years of exile to restore her family. She demonstrates the contemporary experiences of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, facing curfews and military raids. Khalifeh's novel transitions between the present and the past, as a surge of childhood memories transports Nidal and her readers to pre-1948 Palestine. Khalifeh's novel imparts historical insights to Western audiences who may not realize that Palestinians eventually mobilised to resist Jewish settlers' intent on seizing their land and resources, aiming to drive them into the sea. The Palestinian freedom fighters faced significant disadvantages, as the British provided arms and aerial support to the Jewish forces, facilitating the establishment of the future Israeli state. Certeau (2002) considered these *tactics* as every day form of subversive cultural practices). Khalifeh illuminates the injustices faced by Palestinians and the losses experienced by her people and the sorrows of living under occupation. Alhajjar and Alwadhiah (n.d) indicate that Israel uses *terrorist forms to subject Palestinians* (p. 137).

Nidal freaks out in an airport while being treated like a parcel: "It is annoying to feel treated like a human parcel moving between airports" (p. 1). The non-human treatment of Palestinians who cannot move in and out, even in their own country, is referenced by Said: "the Arab is conceived of now as a shadow" (that dogs the Jew) (p.286). Khalief's fragile city expresses deterritorialization of the earth by intruders and colonisers. The city's strangeness and disempowerment of residents compelled her: "Jerusalem looked grey to me, a desolate city, surrounded by people who were at a loss. And the cold was biting" (p. 257). Nidal references Jesus Christ, saying: "He was Jesus Christ himself...not able to raise the dead from this coffin, from this ruin ... to shove death away from the dead" (p. 195). There is no life in Palestinian bodies because of the bionecropolitical behaviour of Israel and its collaborators. The *discriminatory features* of Israel victimized the Palestinian cause and bodies, unjustified" (UN Fact Finding Mission, 2011).

The condition of Nidal: “As a human being, I am dot; rather a comma, on a new line and in a new paragraph” (p.2). She advocates for a decolonial approach to (post)continental geopolitics and the body-politics of knowledge, emphasizing the importance of locality as a key epistemological link between the sensing body and its perception of the world, rooted in specific locales and their unique histories. This re-evaluation transforms the Cartesian assertion (1640), *I think, therefore I am into I am where I think*, which challenges the prevailing neo-liberal market ideology and signals the decline of the last progressive-universalist narrative in global history, along with the fading of the final closed utopia of global salvation. “They called me Nidal, which means: 'struggle, because my name described a certain phase in our history” (p.5). Nidal struggles to find the meaning and worth of life, similar to Palestine, which had no significance in the political world; therefore, it had been crushed for so many years. Nidal’s uncle’s explanation: “Art is death and revelation...in Palestine” (p. 20), exhibiting NYC’s depiction of ongoing struggle, repetition of history, and inter-communal solidarity (Lee, 2024).

Nidal’s pang of distress due to *imposed* separation from Rabi (p. 84) corroborates the struggle for survival of a *life lived in anonymity and alienation* (Smith, 2004) *of being nowhere* (Malkii, 2002) *without human and civil rights* (Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). Nidal’s concern about the proper voltage of electricity, gas, wires, pipes, solar and all the edible things expresses her *transience state* (Agier,2011): “We were in a state of blockade and people could not find bread” (p. 124). Abu Saad’s son’s “fifty years of imprisonment” in 1967 (p.125) is a big disaster, as if they had lost their son forever: “I went overseas and endured our nation’s losses like everyone (p. 200). The mechanisms of war, death, and violence haunt the Palestinian subjects every day so they cannot manage to live within the practices of sovereign power.

#### 4. Conclusion

According to Kapferer (2015), Sinhala Sorcery reveals essential truths about society’s human condition and power dynamics. Sorcery exists outside conventional social and political logic, displacing its victims from established hierarchies and forming new, at times profoundly destructive, connections. Rabi manifests the condition of ordinary people after the explosion near the mosque and states that all of them are in a fear that they ran away, mixing and wearing the shoes of someone else. Rabi tells: “The occupation had reduced all the people to a single size” (p. 170). The practices and technologies of destruction enlarge Palestinians’ sufferings to another level: “There was bloodletting, funerals, high prices, and unemployment. Here, we had suffocation and barriers” (p. 171). The individual from nowhere, devoid of political identity, national affiliation, and fundamental human rights, simply due to the circumstances of birth, is a being whose very biological processes are governed and manipulated by a sovereign authority: the Iraqi

individual, suffering from starvation, subjected to a nefarious scheme of economic sanctions that Gordon refers to as a *weapon of mass destruction*, which has resulted in a *sanctioned act of mass slaughter*; the Tamil, the Chechen, the Tibetan, the indigenous Zapatista an alarmingly extensive roster of groups who are oppressed to varying degrees by an occupying or colonizing force (Agamben). Urban genocide according to Abdullah Al-Bayyari has evolved into a mechanism for dismantling the organizational and cultural fabric of the city, representing a biological and political assault on the population, both materially and symbolically. The meaning of life has been proposed as an important resource for general wellbeing and psychological health, but Palestinians are deprived of that meaning due to war and its evils (Allen, A. R. 2022). In this way we come to know that bioviolence is not only working to create bodily domination but fragmentation in communities and environmental exhaustion imposed by Israeli occupation. In Khalief's world body become a site of political inscription and Palestinians have biological inheritences of fear, displacement and danger passed across generations. Khalifeh demonstrates that infrastructure under occupation is never neutral; it becomes a technology of rule that regulates circulation, visibility, intimacy, and belonging.

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