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Asma HALEM *

University of Larbi Ben M'hidi - Oum El Bouaghi (Algeria)
Laboratoire de Didactique, Enonciation, Corpus, Linguistique,
Interaction Culturelle (DECLIC)
Email : asma.halem@univ-ueb.dz

Abstract :

*The Zionist myth of "a land without people for a people without a land" and the biblical narrative of a "chosen people in the promised land" laid the ideological foundation for the creation of the racial settler-colonial state of Israel. By employing biopolitical, disciplinary, and necropolitical strategies, this entity aims to systematically erase the Palestinian presence. In response, Palestinians have cultivated sumud as a mode of subjectivity and resistance politics. This paper examines how Susan Abulhawa's *Against the Loveless World* (2020) constructs sumud as both individual and collective practices in the face of racial settler-colonial violence. This study employs a close reading of Abulhawa's novel, guided by Moulard-Leonard's (2005) Deleuzian reading of Frantz Fanon and Meiri's (2014) conceptualization of sumud as a relational and embodied practice. It explores how the novel reconfigures subjectivity, space, and political agency. By analysing Nahr's journey through multiple sites of exile, this study exemplifies how sumud is cultivated through both personal and collective practices. Ultimately, the novel enacts a counter-narrative that actively reshapes political imaginaries toward liberation.*

Keywords: Palestinian Literature, Sumud, Resistance, Susan Abulhawa, Biopolitics, Revolutionary Becoming

الملخص :

لقد شككت الأسطورة الصهيونية "أرض بلا شعب لشعب بلا أرض" والسردية التوراتية "شعب مختار في أرض الميعاد" الأساس الأيديولوجي لقيام الدولة الاستعمارية الاستيطانية العنصرية المسماة إسرائيل. ومن خلال توظيف استراتيجيات بيوسياسية، عقابية، ونكروسياسية، تسعى هذه الدولة إلى محو الوجود الفلسطيني بشكل منهجي. وفي مواجهة ذلك، طور الفلسطينيون مفهوم الصمود كشكل من أشكال الذاتية والسياسة المقاومة. تتناول هذه الدراسة تصوير رواية ضد عالم بلا حب (2020) لسوزان أبو الهوى الصمود كممارسة فردية وجماعية في مواجهة العنف الاستعماري الاستيطاني العنصري. وتستند الدراسة إلى قراءة تحليلية للرواية، مسترشدة بقراءة مولارد-ليونارد (2005) للدولزية لفرانز فانون، ومفهوم معاري للصمود كممارسة علائقية ومتجسدة. وتبرز كيف تعيد الرواية تشكيل الذاتية والفضاء والفاعلية السياسية. ومن خلال تحليل رحلة نهر عبر مواقع متعددة للنفي والمنفى، تظهر هذه الدراسة كيف يعنى الصمود من خلال ممارسات فردية وجماعية على حد سواء. وفي نهاية المطاف، تقدم الرواية سردية مضادة تعيد تشكيل المخيلة السياسية باتجاه التحرر، من خلال ضرورة ثورية مستمرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب الفلسطيني، الصمود، المقاومة، سوزان أبو الهوى، البيوسياسية، الضرورة الثورية.

This study aims to explore *sumud* as a mode of Palestinian subjectivity and resistance politics. It begins by establishing Israel as a racial settler-colonial state founded on the continual erasure of Palestinians. Taking this as a point of departure, this paper engages with theories of biopolitics, necropolitics, and disciplinary power to better understand the mechanisms through which Palestinian life is regulated, devalued, and erased. From there, the study turns to the theoretical framework that theorizes *sumud* as a relational response to these forms of violence. It draws on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor politics to frame *sumud* as a subversive mode of becoming that unsettles colonial structures of power. The discussion then situates Susan Abulhawa's *Against the Loveless World* (2020) within the existing scholarship in order to contextualize the novel's political and aesthetic interventions. Finally, the study offers a close reading of the text. It argues that *sumud*, as represented in the novel, functions as a gendered, singular, and collective mode of resistance that reconfigures Palestinian subjectivity and challenges the biopolitical and necropolitical structures of Zionist settler colonialism.

1. Israel as a Racial Settler-colonial State

Israel functions as a racial settler-colonial state dependent on the systematic erasure of Palestinians (Goldberg, 2008; Lentin, 2008, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). In its contest for the land of Palestine, it systematically employs biopolitical, disciplinary, necropolitical, and discursive mechanisms to construct and preserve Jewish homogeneity through the exclusion and elimination of Palestinians. Since the traumatic rupture of the Nakba in 1948, the settler-colonial state has systematically managed, punished, and disposed of Palestinian bodies. In 1948, over 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly removed, and 531 villages were destroyed (Pappé, 2006). 300,000 more Palestinians were removed in the colonial extension project of 1967 (Masalha, 2001). As a result, there are over 7 million Palestinian refugees around the world today (Refugees International, 2025). This systemic "logic of elimination," to use Patrick Wolfe's (2006) term, has been furthered with the introduction of racial discriminatory laws. The Adalah's Discriminatory Laws Database (2017) lists over 65 Israeli laws that discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. For example, the continuous amendments to citizenship law authorizes the revocation of the Israeli citizenship. From 1967 to 2016, at least 14,500 had their residency revoked. The latest amendment of 2018 authorized revocation for any perceived breach of loyalty to the State of Israel (Adalah, 2022). This amendment is a punitive measure that contradicts international humanitarian laws such as the Hague Regulations and Fourth

Geneva Conventions which prohibit occupying powers from demanding allegiance from the occupied population (Al-Haq, 2018). The most concrete evidence of this violent erasure is Israel's annihilation of Gaza, which has intensified since October 7, 2023, and is considered by many human rights experts to be an act of genocide (Verdeja, 2025). These few examples of racial settler-colonialism demonstrate that the erasure of Palestinians is not a singular event but an ongoing structural process, where land appropriation becomes a "contest for life" itself. Central to this process is the construction of ideological narratives that both obscure the realities of settler violence and naturalize the Zionist entitlement to the land.

The Zionist settler-colonial entity legitimizes its claims and justifies the erasure of Palestinians through strategic use of invented histories and national myths, illustrating what Lentin (2016) identifies as the racial state's production of homogeneity through exclusionary narratives. The hegemonic myth of "a land without people for a people without a land" and the biblical narrative of "chosen people in the promised land" propagated by Zionists claim that Palestine was an empty land. As Mbembe (2003) argues, such colonial narratives derive legitimacy from claims of divine right, where "national identity is imagined as an identity against the Other" through the violent intertwining of sacred geography and state sovereignty. Furthermore, these narratives have also been weaponized to earn the sympathy of the West. The worldwide dissemination of these narratives through multiple forms and cultural production effectively silenced the voice of the Palestinians. Susan Abulhawa notes:

It was natural that the first story be that of the conquerors [...] It was easier to hear a story of a land without a people. It was a romantic happy ending. The Palestinian narrative was in Arabic. It was unappealing, and it didn't reach the West in those early years. (as cited in Snaije, 2012, § 12)

These romanticized biblical narratives ontologically frame colonization as a historical redemption while erasing Indigenous presence and condemning resistance as illegitimate. The positive reception by Western reception reveals how narrative weaponization enables both discursive erasure, by obscuring the ongoing elimination of Indigenous people, and material domination.

2. Zionist Biopolitical, Necropolitical, and Gendered violence

The Zionist racial settler colonialism can be critically understood through the intersecting frameworks of biopolitics, necropolitics, and gendered violence

which illuminate how Israeli state power regulates life, death, and bodies in order to sustain colonial control over the Palestinian land and the indigenous population. Lentin (2016) argues that racial settler colonialism is intrinsic to biopower. In similar vein, Wolfe (2006) notes that “Land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus contests for land can be— indeed, often are— contests for life.” This reflexive relationship between the appropriation of land and the subjugation of the Palestinian Other necessitates an examination of the intertwined mechanisms of biopolitics, necropolitics, and gendered violence. Often associated with the works of Michel Foucault (2004), Biopolitics is defined as “the power of regularization” which “consists in making live and letting die”. It ontologically defines who is allowed to prosper by the state and who can be left to die and even be killed with impunity. Biopolitics inscribes racism into the functioning of the state (Foucault, 2004). As a technology of regularization, the Zionist state issues Identification Cards in order to segregate the population. Helga Tawil-Souri (2010) notes that ID cards enables control through fragmenting the population into coloured ID (green for the West Bank, orange for Gaze, blue for Jerusalem, and Israeli); by language (Hebrew and Arabic); and nationality (Jew, Arab, or Druze). These cards do not grant the Palestinians civic or political rights, rather they are used as tools of surveillance, control, and containment (220). These markers of identities position the indigenous bodies living within the occupied territories as ‘foreigners’ while denying the return of refugees and exiled. For refugee in international law, being denied an identification card is equal to denial from existence. This systematic erasure of legal and political recognition renders Palestinian lives precarious, illustrating how Zionist settler-colonialism reduces them to what Giorgio Agamben (1998) defines as “bare life,” a condition further intensified through necropolitical regimes of domination and control.

Although Agamben (1998) expands Michel Foucault’s theory of biopolitics through the concepts of “bare life” and the “state of exception,” both theorists overlook colonial power structures, a gap that Achille Mbembe (2003, 2019) addresses by theorizing necropolitics, a framework that proves especially vital for analysing the logics of domination underpinning Israel’s occupation of Palestine. Agamben (1998) notes that sovereignty manifests not only through the institution of law but also through its suspension by the creation of “states of exception.” At the mercy of this state of no law is the figure of the homo sacer, or bare life. It worthless form of life that is less than human. The killing of such a life is not sanctioned by law as it “may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (Agamben, 1998). Being a pure body, bare life does not have judicial rights or freedoms to sacrifice. Departing further from the theory of biopolitics, Mbembe (2003, 2019) theorises necropolitics as a form of power which regulates death

instead of life. These technologies are used to both “destroying persons and creating death-worlds”. Gaza, as an open air prison, is an example of a death-world. When deployed, these powers affect a wide and diverse range of targets such as identity, bodies, economy, and movement. Among the most insidious effects of these intersecting powers is the deployment of gendered violence as a tool of domination, revealing how colonial control extends deeply into the intimate and reproductive lives of the colonized.

The practices of biopolitics are also gender based, as they operate through the regulation of reproductive rights, sexuality, and the domination of women's bodies. Palestinian women are doubly colonized, first by the settler-colonial powers, and second by the socio-patriarchal structures within which they exist. Their bodies have been assigned with various agenda. On the one hand, the settler-colonial state controls their bodies, sexuality, and autonomy through violence. It treat the birthing body of Palestinian women as threat since they are the vessels of indigenous population growth (Kanaaneh, 2002). The colonial state has also deployed orientalist tropes as an excuse to garner Western sympathy by claiming to save Palestinian women from the oppression of the backward Palestinian men and their oppressive patriarchal system (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2015). The existence within the occupied territories is also under the constant threat of sexual violence at the hands of Zionist settlers. On the other hand, Palestinian women are required to submit to the traditionalist gendered assumptions and patriarchal expectations even though the family and communal system of the tribe or the village which used to guarantee women's protection has been destroyed by colonisation.

Joseph Pugliese (2020) extend the analysis of biopolitics beyond anthropocentrism to include the more-than-human. He argues that ecology, as a relational framework, blurs the boundaries between human and more-than-human lives especially in the aftermath of settler-colonial and militarized violence. The Zionist settler-colonial entity used and abused ecology in its attempts to erase the Palestinian presence. It destroyed fig and olive trees, which are symbols of Palestinian nationalism. It planted Pine trees in order to Europeanize the landscape and further distance it from its Palestinian character (Jaber, 2019). The Jewish National Fund (JNF) planted forests across the occupied territories in order to conceal the ruins of Palestinian villages (Nasooha, 2024). These examples demonstrate the racial logic of the Zionist settler colonialism that marks both Indigenous Palestinians and more-than-human entities as disposable. Yet, as I argue, the persistent *sumud* (steadfastness) and *muqawama* (resistance) of Palestinians exposes the failures

of these biopolitical, necropolitical, and gendered apparatuses of elimination and subjugation.

3. Theoretical Framework

Although the biopolitical, necropolitical, and disciplinary mechanisms of the Zionist settler colonialism may appear inescapable in their ability to subjugate, regulate, and discipline life at every level, the concept of the “power of life” offers a vital and subversive counterforce. As previously mentioned, biopolitics functions by making life itself the object of control. However, as Wilmer S. E. and Žukauskaitė Audronė (2015) argue, “It is precisely when power takes life as its object that it is confronted with a different kind of power, namely, the power of life”. This alternative force is not external to life but is immanent within it. It is a material potentiality for resistance and transformation. Gilles Deleuze emphasizes that life is a dynamic and uncontrollable force, one that “cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram” (Deleuze, 2006). Thus, while racial settler colonialism attempts to systematically totalize and regulate life, vitality introduces fluidity, unpredictability, and renewal. This suggests that resistance does not merely oppose power in a fixed binary dualism. It emerges from within life itself, making even the most entrenched systems of domination vulnerable to subversion from below. Building on this understanding, *sumud* can be seen as an embodied expression of the power of life.

As a lived practice of resilience and resistance, *sumud* exemplifies the Deleuzian “power of life.” It is manifested through everyday acts of defiance against the various mechanisms of settler colonial control (Halper, 2006; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Meari, 2014). As an immanent relational force, it resists domination not through direct opposition, but through persistent, creative modes of existence and becoming. It is a Palestinian anticolonial mode of being practiced by an “ethical-political relational” network of subjectivities (Maeri, 2014). It is a relational concept that does not have a fixed or comprehensive definition due to the infinite practices that compose it. In this sense, *Sumud* can be thought of as a force practiced with varying degrees through Palestinian bodies. As such, it is continuously changing with each innovative practice made by Palestinians in their struggle for liberation. Every time a Palestinian mother sings her children to sleep under military siege, a farmer replants a tree after bombardment, or a prisoner reminiscing about her/his previous life within the wall of colonial prison cell, *Sumud* takes on a new momentum.

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between major and minor politics provides a vital framework for understanding how resistance can emerge not through confrontation with power, but through processes of becoming that disrupt dominant structures from within. Major politics, or macropolitics, functions by constructing homogenous, countable, and controllable identities, what Žukauskaitė (2016) describes as "self-identical" majorities shaped by the state. In contrast, minor politics, or micropolitics, involves "the becoming of minorities," which destabilizes and escapes these systems of control (Žukauskaitė, 2016). Becoming-minoritarian, therefore, is not about celebrating existing minority identities but about entering into a fluid process that resists fixed categorization.

Following Valentine Moulard-Leonard's (2005) Deleuzian reading of Fanon and Lena Meari (2014) theorizations of *sumud* as a relational practice, this paper employs a close reading of the novel *Against the Loveless* (2020) alongside Deleuzian becoming-minoritarian. It examines the instances of singular and collective deterritorialization enacted in the novel in order to map the movement of becoming-minoritarian. By capturing these instances of deterritorialization, the author participates in *sumud*. As a counter-narrative, the novel transforms storytelling into a material practice that subverts dominant colonial narratives.

4. Literature Review

Abulhawa was born in Kuwait in 1970 after the forced expulsion of her parent in the war of 1967. She experienced first-hand the indignity of dispossession. She was constantly uprooted from her young age. At just 16 years old, she had lived in 21 different homes (Abulhawa, 2012). In the "Author's Note" of *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), she notes that she began to write out of a need for Palestinian counter-narratives. Her life experiences fuelled her writing and humanitarian activism. In *Against the Loveless World* (2020), she represents the indignity of displacement and the injustice that the Palestinians must endure wherever they go. The novel is about the life and survival of a second-generation Palestinian woman named Nahr, a refugee and political prisoner. Continually oscillating between past and present, the novel is divided into seven sections all of which start with a brief moment in Nahr's confinement cell. Nahr populates her cell with her lived experience starting from her early life in Kuwait with her family, to her expulsion to Jordan, then Amman, to her eventual return to Palestine where she joins the Palestinian Resistance. Nahr struggles to live a fulfilling life due to her status as a refugee, and the patriarchal systems, that governs her existence.

The recent scholarship on *Against the Loveless World* (2020) has adopted multiple theoretical lenses to examine its treatment of colonization, resistance, identity formation, and gendered oppression under Zionist settler-colonialism. Shahzad and Tanvir, (2023) focus on the intersection of gender and colonization. Their research explore the novel through the concept of double colonization and subaltern politics introduced by Gayatri Spivak. They highlight the importance of investigating the convergence of gender and colonization in order to understand Palestinian women's experiences. Similarly, Aamna Humayun and Akhtar (2024) analyse the intersectional oppression of women by applying Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework. They demonstrate how Nahr's gendered Arab identity and refugee status compound her subjugation under overlapping systems of militarism, patriarchy, and colonialism while simultaneously revealing spaces of resistance within these oppressive structures.

Scholarship examining diasporic consciousness and eco-criticism offer additional perspectives Haneen Amireh et al., (2025) employ Bhabh's concept of "third space" to theorize Nahr's liminal existence as a challenge to dominant narratives. They highlights how Nahr's radical reclamation of agency and love challenges sociopolitical domination, aligning her struggle with broader anti-colonial resistance. In similar vein, Oumeima Bousrih (2024) examines the novel in light of the growing body of diasporic literature by women, focusing on themes of alienation, displacement, and identity crisis through gendered lens. She analyses Abulhawa's depiction of Palestinian female identity and intersectionality, offering insights into how displacement and discrimination reshape personal and collective narratives. M. Nasooaha (2024) examines the weaponization of ecology to erase the Palestinian history. She analyses Abulhawa's novels as sites of memory that reclaim agricultural heritage and resist cultural amnesia. By centering ecological remembrance, her study underscores literature's power to challenge colonial erasure and preserve indigenous ties to land.

Alternative critical approaches have expanded the novel's interpretive frameworks. Hanan Muzaffar (2025) establishes crucial connections between land dispossession and the commodification of women's bodies. She notes that Nahr's body bears the brutal imprint of colonial and patriarchal domination. These violations parallel the systematic exploitation of Palestinian land under settle-occupation. Yet the body has the capacity for resistance, Nahr transforms her corporeal existence into a site of defiance. Moreover, Ebrahim Mohammed Alwuraafi (2024) highlights Susan Abulhawa's role as a Palestinian American writer who challenges Zionist narratives and corrects misrepresentations of

Palestinians in Western media and literature. He presents her novels as powerful counter-narratives that reclaim Palestinian history, resist the silencing of Palestinian voices, and critique Israel as a settler-colonial entity. He demonstrates how Abulhawa constructs an alternative national narrative that affirms Palestinian identity and historical presence. While these studies have employed postcolonial, feminist, eco-critical, and intersectional frameworks, there remains a gap for analysing Palestinian resistance in the novel through the lens of *sumud* as a relational practice of revolutionary becoming.

5. Literatures of Contagion

The novel as a whole is a practice of individual *sumud* that extend to create a collective affective becoming. This dimension is manifested through the contagious force of literature. Palestinian literatures of resistance contaminates oppressed peoples globally through affective resonance. Literature has the power to inspire individuals to identify with the Palestinian struggle and resist oppression in their own contexts. Literature of *sumud* is thus a vehicle through which revolutionary potentiality is actualized. It invites the reader to become a co-creator. For Abulhawa, liberation deepens when it is bound to the liberation of others (as cited in Qabaha, 2019). This contagious quality is vividly illustrated in the novel *Against the Loveless World* (2020). Nahr and Bilel find self-recognition in the oppression of African Americans. They find strength in James Baldwin's assertion that "you can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a nigger" (as cited in Abulhawa, 2020). Through Baldwin's voice, they come to recognize the global structure of racial oppression and are simultaneously inspired. By inviting readers into a shared act of creation, literature becomes a living practice of a collective *sumud*.

6. Relational Sumud in Domestic Spaces

Nahr's survival and resilience throughout the numerous contested sites of exile she inhabited are forms of individual *sumud* that have been created, challenged, and sustained through communal relations. Throughout her life, Nahr was often confronted with her double marginality. Colonialism made her a refugee. She was stateless and unwanted wherever she went. During her formative years, Nahr held on to the fragile illusion of being a Kuwaiti "even though we could never be citizens" (Abulhawa, 2020). This tension between belonging and exclusion, between the desire for rootedness and the reality of erasure, frames her early manifestations of *sumud*. It is a quiet, daily assertions of presence in a world that denies her legitimacy. In order to survive statelessness, the Palestinian diasporic community that was uprooted after the 1948 attempted to

recreate bonds of solidarity and social networks lost after the Nakba (Ghabra, 2019). Palestinians from all over the occupied territories fled or were forcibly displaced congregated in refugee camps or ghetto. These improvised communities developed alternative kinship systems based on shared nationality and collective trauma rather than traditional familial ties. Often, these microcosms relied on the model of traditional patriarchal systems that existed in pre-colonisation Palestine (Ghabra, 2019). However, without the mitigating influences of extended family networks and tribe-based accountability, these systems made the position of women more vulnerable and precarious. Women had no form of protection and recourse in case of injustice.

In such circumstances, Nahr learned from an early age that the only way for her to obtain value in her society was through marriage. During the negotiations for her marriage, it was proposed that she forgoes the wedding party. She accepted because “our job as women was to sacrifice, and I was a woman now” (Abulhawa, 2020). This choice that defined her womanhood, would later be the cause that cheapened her in the eyes of others (Abulhawa, 2020). Shortly after her wedding, her husband deserts her. At 19 years old, she is blamed for the failure of her marriage. Had she never experienced dispossession, she would have been protected by her tribe and family. They would have ensured restitution. However, the Nakba led to the scattering of her kin. “Until I met Um Buraq, it had never occurred to me that patriarchy was anything but the natural order of life” (Abulhawa, 2020). Although Um Buraq blackmailed to prostitution, she saved Nahr from the passivity of victimhood into an alternative way of existing from the margins.

Nahr’s story exemplifies the double marginalization of Palestinian women and the intersection of colonial and patriarchal oppressions. When her husband abandoned her, the absence of traditional kinship protections left her vulnerable to social stigma and economic desperation. Her position is similar to the plight of many Palestinian women for whom the loss of social, economic, educational, and political opportunities of limited their options and marginalized them further. Once again rendered worthless, Nahr attempts to regain value through sacrifice. She sells her body under the identity of Almas in order to support her family. However, prostitution only diminished her further. “Each bought a little piece of me and took it away forever” (Abulhawa, 2020). Yet, even in these abject circumstances, Nahr’s *sumud* persists.

She is able to seduce Abu Moath, a bank branch manager. He is one of the mitkawteen, Palestinians who had been granted Kuwaiti citizenship. Abu Moath occupies an ambivalent position. Legally, he is Kuwaiti. Yet, he socially

marginalized due to his origins. He rejects his Palestinian identity and tries to assimilate into a society that still views him as an outsider. His shame manifests as violence toward Nahr whom he uses as a vessel for his own self-loathing. In a perverse reenactment of colonial violence, he dominates a more vulnerable body. "The colonized subject will first train this aggressiveness sedimented in his muscles against his own people" (Fanon, 1961). Nahr allowed the abuse and sacrificed herself in the hopes of saving her family. In Abu Moath, she saw an opportunity for fanatical freedom. "I let myself get pregnant, thinking I could trap him into marrying me. I thought he could help me get a divorce. But he took me to Egypt instead" (Abulhawa, 2020). After a traumatic coercive abortion and Abu Moath's abandonment, Nahr stopped prostituting herself. She decided to save her family by her own means. With the help of Um Buraq she opened a beauty salon. Life seemed well until everything was destroyed by the failed Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The aftermath of the failed Iraqi invasion created a state of exception in which Palestinian lives transitioned from being tolerated as a labour force into being despised. Their very existence became criminalized overnight. "In one way or another, Palestinians would have to pay, not only because some collaborated with Iraq, but also because we were a convenient proxy for vengeance against Saddam" (Abulhawa, 2020). Like many Palestinians, her accounts were frozen, her family was being forcibly evicted from their home, and her brother was unjustly arrested and tortured. The Palestinians became once again subject to unchecked violence and dispossession. Yet Nahr refuses passive victimhood. She plays into what Agamben (2007) terms acts of profanation. To profane is a practical mode of resistance aimed to returning things to free use. In this instance, she took Abu Moath's money to serve her family's needs and to pay for her brother's lawyer. By stealing his bank card and PIN, she hijacks the mechanisms of her dispossession, turning the state's financial exclusion against one of its enforcers. This act is more than just theft; it is a subversion of the exception itself. Where Agamben's framework often renders the homo sacer powerless, Palestinian *sumud* demonstrates that bare life can be weaponized. Furthermore, Nahr was able to exploit Abu Moath due to his assumption that her rape would render her docile. Instead she used her marginal position outside the law's protection, but also beyond its reach, to reclaim agency through becoming-imperceptible.

Another example of the gendered Palestinian *sumud* is through the preservation of collective memory. Memory is a powerful counter-narrative that effectively deterritorializes hegemonic discourses. Women have taken the role of custodian of the Palestinian memories. Nahr's grandmother, for instance, transmits *sumud*

through oral histories that serve to anchor Nahr to her a lineage in the village of Ein el-Sultan established in 7000 BC. Another example through which Palestinian women commemorate national memory, is through Tatreez, or Palestinian Embroidery, is especially significant testament to the heritage of Palestine. Nahr's wedding thobe for example was a historical record. Her mother described:

the basic patterns of a Jerusalem thobe, because we're being erased from her story and her stone [...] this is a collar worn by Canaanite queens. I added these geometric patterns typical of Romi thobes from the Ramallah area to show the olive, almond, and pomegranate trees. On the sides here is the crucifixion from when the Crusaders ruled over us, and here, you see, is the crescent for the return of Jerusalem to Muslim rule since the time of Salah Eddein. (Abulhawa, 2020, pp. 289–90)

These examples of domestic *sumud* demonstrate its personal and collective dimension. It allows Palestinian women to transform suffering into strength and to sustain hope and dignity in the face of dispossession.

7. Relational Sumud in Colonial Spaces

The novel begins each chapter with a brief glimpse of Nahr within her confinement cell called the Cube, a fully automated prison in which she resides in solitary confinement for the past sixteen years. In this space, she exists as a pure entity suspended in limbo. She has no conception of time and lives only to the rhythms of her body's needs or the prison's internal machinations. Penal incarceration is one of techniques of necropower. It aims to eliminate subjects through neutralisation and exile (Mbembe, 2019). Nahr does not break under isolation. She populates the hard concrete wall of her cell with remembered life. She learned to inhibit spaces mentally from her grandmother who mentally never left Palestine despite the forced displacement. "Just as I do now in the Cube, my grandmother roamed Ein el-Sultan in her mind" (Abulhawa, 2020). Thus, rather than being an end, her incarceration becomes just another point in the wide web of her life. This imaginative form of *sumud*, undermines penal authority's attempts to isolate and break the Palestinian psyche. This relationally is also expressed through narrative form. The sections that depict her confinement in the cube are entitled after spatial directions. For example, the chapter entitled "The Cube, East" is followed by an account of her life in Kuwait, whereas "The Cube, West" narrates her life under Iraqi occupation. In this way, she links her current positioning to other spaces she used to inhabit.

The penal system depends on the absolute negation of the incarcerated subject. It denies them recognition and reduces them to bare life. As a highly automated system, the Cube attempted to diminish the contact of the prisoners to the outside world. However, the very need of the Zionist entity to flaunt this invention or use Nahr's story to appeal to the sympathies of the West by allowing visits from journalists, human rights workers, or even the surveilling presence of prison guards, for example, paradoxically rupture this logic of erasure. These moments force the colonial apparatus to engage with Nahr. It inadvertently reaffirms her existence as a political subject. The interrogator's demand for confession, the journalist's request for testimony, or the guard's enforcement of discipline all become sites where Nahr's existence is unwittingly acknowledged. Even if these glimpses of her agency do not enable her to free her body, Nahr uses them to mock and subvert colonial powers. When interviewed by an Israeli journalist, she refuses to answer the journalist question. She declares "Ah, the authorities did not run them by me. Rest assured that I shall reprimand them accordingly" (Abulhawa, 2020). Her sarcastic statement unsettles the journalist and enables her to claim control away from those in power.

In another instance of deterritorialization of colonial apparatus, she personifies the shower as a relational entity by calling him Attar. She disempowers the arbitrary sensory violence of the water's temperature by treating it as a lover's torturing passion:

I don't think of it as a light anymore. They are Attar's eyes, his warmth, his arrival and presence. I watch it sometimes, waiting. And when his eyes make my body and the room one in red, I quickly remove my clothes and stand to receive him [...] I love him whether the water is hot or cold. When it is perfect, I imagine Attar loves me. But it does not last. (Abulhawa, 2020)

Another way in which colonial powers exert their powers is through interrogation in which the coloniser demands not just information, but the detainee's active participation in their own subjugation. It aims to fix the position of the coloniser and the colonised (Meari, 2014). In both Arabic connotations of confession, *i'tiraf illa-* meaning to confess to, and *i'tiraf bi-* referring to the acknowledgement of something, there is an inherent acceptance of the power of the other over the self (Meari, 2014). Nahr throughout her interrogations, trials, and numerous interviews by agents of the colonial state was able to practice *sumud*. Rather than being the one who reluctantly gave

information, she was able to extract information from the colonisers twice during her interrogations.

“We have a lot of questions for you, Yaqoot. But first you have to tell us, where is Bilal?” I saw that he immediately regretted asking me, because I must have smiled or somehow betrayed a sense of relief. “I don’t know,” I said. He tried but could not conceal his ire. Instead of getting information, he’d inadvertently told me Bilal had gotten away. All three men were rattled by my satisfaction. They unknowingly gave away one more bit of information. (Abulhawa, 2020)

Furthermore, she subverted the judiciary colonial power by singing during her trial. She “colonized the colonizer’s space of authority. I made myself free in chains and held that courtroom captive to my freedom.” (Abulhawa, 2020). Through the coverage of reporters present at the trial, she was able to send a worldwide message of defiance and *sumud* that would inspire. However, in order to discredit her heroic act, the colonial state relied on the double oppression of women. They released photos of Nahr that depicted her former life as a prostitute. They relied on patriarchy to silence her stance and taint her legacy in shame. Yet, her *sumud* weighted in her favour. Some of the articles published described their awe in the face of her heroism. “Israel had not been able to censor the footage that showed their court humiliated and their authority diminished by a Palestinian woman in shackles.” (Abulhawa, 2020).

8. Decolonial revolutionary becoming in Palestine

Growing up Nahr was not able, or rather, chose not to connect with Palestine as an assemblage of intergenerational memories, hope, and grief. As a way of survival, she chose to consider herself Kuwaiti even though she was aware that they could never be citizens. She only knew Palestine as “sound bites from the news and conversations of adults” (Aboulhawa, 2020). However, as argued by Gregory Rachel Fox (2021), memories are enfolded rather than forgotten and then they are selectively unfolded. When she decided to go to Palestine to divorce her absentee husband, the country began to feel real. “It was no longer the lost home and heritage trapped in Mama’s tin box of old photos from her childhood in Haifa, my parents’ wedding, and their life in Ein el-Sultan” (Abulhawa, 2020).

Nahr’s return to Palestine marks not merely a geographic homecoming but an ontological reorientation. This transformation is facilitated through her relational connection with the more-than-human. Her deliberate seeking of her mother’s

stolen fig trees reveals memory as an active, embodied practice of resistance in which trees become both witness and comrade in *sumud*. These centuries-old and deeply rooted trees are not passive symbols of the land but active participants in the struggle against erasure. The ancient fig tree symbolizes the deep-rooted Palestinian heritage, linking generations through family lineage. Its cultivation is a ritual that fosters communal life through shared care, harvest, and celebration. When Nahr relates to these trees, she does not simply remember her mother; she enters into a transgenerational dialogue with the land itself. The enduring presence of the trees offers her a form of non-human kinship. As she notes, "this tree was a member of my family. I belonged to it. All the trees in that garden were my family." (Abulhawa, 2020). She articulated a rationality that challenges anthropocentric settler-colonialist assumptions of ownership. When the women who stole her mother home came to chase her out, Nahr punched her emboldened by her fierce desire to defend the trees.

In the loving embrace of the Palestinians she met in her ancestral land, Nahr saw a glimpse of what a liberated Palestinian future looks like. Living in Hajjeh Um Mhammed's home, helping at the bakery or the salon, spending the evenings at the café with friends, learning traditional knowledge and agriculture from Bilal. She began healing from the trauma of displacement and dispossession. With Bilal, she learned true unconditional love. He was the image of a secure man who did not compromise his values and who stood firm against colonisation. He is a national hero and a humble revolutionary who loved life and books. He was content in his land with his herd of sheep in perfect laziness. Bilal refused to judge her for her past. He rejected her shame and celebrated her as equal; "The way you live your life in our culture, without apology or shame, even if with sadness, makes you extraordinary and special, Nahr. You, more than any of us, are a revolutionary, and the irony is that you don't even see it" (Abulhawa, 2020). Within this system of solidarity, Nahr found the resolution to join the fight for a liberated Palestine.

Nahr joined Bilal and the others in the resistance. After a failed operation of arms dealing, the group felt defeated and limited in their next objectives. The settler-colonial state was monitoring their movements and placed spies to obstruct them. Bilal proposed a joined operation in which they attacked a colonial checkpoint simultaneously. When Samer asked about the outcome of this operation. Bilal ominously declared "we have no then what here [...] That's it. That's what we can do" (Abulhawa, 2020). For Bilal, resistance meant organising small operations until they get, captured, died, or Palestine is liberated. However, the group felt defeated. The dream of liberty felt

unattainable. Nahr interjected and formulated a vision of *sumud* as a revolutionary becoming that operates outside teleological ends:

we need chaos, not organization [...] Remember when I fizzed a soda bottle in a soldier's face? You all thought it was such a big deal, and the soldiers nearly shit their pants. Why?" I answered [...] Because it was a little bit of chaos in a theater of organization! [...] I think whatever we start should be with the goal of igniting imaginations for people to act in their own ways, and trust that they will imagine what we've not. (Abulhawa, 2020)

She equated this theory of chaos to dancing. Dancing is a response to the liberating force of music. It is spontaneous, chaotic, and inspiring. Dancing for Nahr, in this example, is distinct from the type of dancing she used to perform for the male gaze. Dancing here is the actualization, or materialisation, of pure joy that deterritorialize being and fuses it with music.

As a form of deterritorialization, chaos disrupts colonial organisation. It frees the Palestinian resistance from the constraints of biopolitical and necropolitical surveillance apparatuses. "We just have to figure out what that music is that will compel individuals and small circles of people to act however they can all over the country, without trying to organize them in advance" (Abulhawa, 2020). Nahr frames *sumud*, like dancing and chaos, not as an external force imposed from outside, but as an immanent rupture emerging from within. She calls for the need to inspire Palestinians and give them hope. "What history retains from the event is its effectuation or crystallization in a state of things; but the event in its becoming escapes history" (Moulard-Leonard, 2005). *Sumud* begins small, but can build momentum until it explodes into a general insurrection and revolution. The Deleuzian lens of this fanonian explosion, as Moulard-Leonard highlights, is the process of becoming-revolutionary. It is immanent, collective, yet singular, and irreducible to predetermined outcomes. By writing this novel, Susan Abulhawa pulled us as readers within this political-psycho-affective force in the hope that we can also amplify the resonance of *sumud* towards greater vibration toward the liberation of Palestine.

9. Conclusion

The Zionist settler colonial entity deploys various forms of powers in order to manage, dispose, and discipline the bodies of Palestinians. However, despite these technologies of terror, Palestinians are still able to resist. Literature is especially important in the struggle for liberation since it provides a counter-narrative to the settler-colonial narrative. As the above discussion shows, literature is able to deterritorialize discourses of power, thus actualising a constant revolutionary becoming. The analysis of the various manifestations of *sumud* used by the novelist Susan Abulhawa in her novel *Against the Loveless World* (2020) shows that colonial hegemony can be individually and collectively deterritorialized. While political resistance was often considered masculine, Abulhawa shows the centrality of female *sumud* to the survival and the struggles for liberation. In spite of their double oppression, Palestinian women are especially skilled in these practices of resilient resistance. Their daily practice of steadfastness, their role as custodians of memory, and their intricate network of solidarity they have created enable them to engender lines of flight.

Nahr's survival under intersecting systems of oppression colonial erasure, economic destitution, and patriarchal violence was not achieved in isolation. It was through the relational practice of *sumud*, cultivated within networks of female solidarity, more-than-human rationality, and Bilal's unconditional love. Her mother, Grandmother, Sahar, Um Buraq, and Jumana were central to her resilience and healing. These relationships function as alternative kinship structures, filling the voids left by the settler-colonial dispossession and displacement. Practicing *sumud*, each in their own way, they were able to uplift one another and brought a vision of a free Palestine closer to actualization.

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45. Although the term Nakba refers to the violent dispossession of Palestinians during the events of 1948, many scholars agree that the persistent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians witnessed today is a continuation of the Nakba. Its latest example is the current genocide currently occurring in Gaza and many parts of occupied Palestine.
46. Usually attributed to Theodor Herzl, the phrase was first used by Lord Shaftesbury in a letter penned in 1853 in which he noted that Palestine was “a country without a nation,” in need of “a nation without a country” (as cited in Garfinkle, 1991). Shaftesbury used the phrase in a political rather than literal sense. He was referring to the lack of a distinct Palestinian national identity based on Eurocentric definitions of nationalism, not to the complete demographic absence of inhabitants in the land. Aware of the political context of the phrase, Israel Zangwill published and popularised the phrase in its current use in 1901 (as cited in Garfinkle, 1991).
47. Pugliese (2020) rejects the concepts of “nonhuman” and “posthuman.” He argues that the prefix non- in nonhuman imposes Eurocentric binary hierarchies on living organisms, while the post- in posthuman celebrates prematurely the supersession of the Anthropocene era. He favours instead the use of “more-than-human” and “other-than-human” to emphasize the agency, alterity, and relationality of living entities.