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*Research Article*

# The Thematic Value of Animality: Human Anguish and Bestialization in Abulhawa's "Against the Loveless World" and Jarrar's "The Story of My Building"

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the thematic value of animality in Susan Abulhawa's "Against the Loveless World" and Randa Jarrar's "The Story of My Building," focusing on its critical role in contemporary Arab Anglophone literature. Drawing on ecocritical and posthumanist frameworks, the study explores how animality mediates human anguish, bestialization, and the symbolic representation of resistance, identity, and the environment. Abulhawa's expansive narrative, set against a backdrop of political turmoil, depicts emotional landscapes shaped by war and displacement. Conversely, Jarrar's concise narrative examines the entanglement of urban life with animal imagery. Both authors employ animality to critique societal norms, interrogate power dynamics, and deepen our understanding of the human condition. Situated within the broader scope of Palestinian literature, this analysis reveals how animality intertwines with ecology, cultural identity, and resilience, reflecting the lived experiences of individuals in conflict zones. By examining these intersections, the study highlights the transformative power of literature in addressing the human-animal dynamic and its relevance to cultural and environmental discourse.

**Keywords**: Cultural Identity, Patriarchy, Colonialism, Deconstruction, Decolonization, Liberation.

## 1. Introduction

In the vast tapestry of literature, the portrayal of animality serves as a multifaceted lens through which we explore the intricate connections between the human and the non-human worlds. In *The Open: Man, and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben explores the concept of animality as the delineation between the human and the non-human, where individuals are subjected to the anthropological machine, a construct that simultaneously includes and excludes humans from animal life to define their humanity. This mechanism, Agamben argues, creates a "zone of indifference" where human life is suspended between the animal and human realms (Agamben, p. 15). Bestialization, in this context, signifies the reduction of humans to a state of mere existence or "bare life," stripping them of agency and individuality, thereby serving as a critique of systems

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that dehumanize and dominate (Agamben, pp. 37–38). This study delves into the realm of animality as depicted in two poignant works: Susan Abulhawa's novel *Against the Loveless World* and Randa Jarrar's short story "The Story of My Building." Through an exploration of these narratives, we unravel the complexities surrounding the human-animal relationship, probing into the depths of human anguish and the process of bestialization as expressed in contemporary Arab Anglophone literature.

Abulhawa's richly woven narrative invites readers to traverse the emotional landscapes of characters grappling with their own humanity amid political strife. Jarrar, on the other hand, through the compact yet evocative medium of a short story, unpacks the intricacies of urban life and its intersections with animality. By analyzing these works, this study seeks to illuminate the symbolic significance of animals in literature, unraveling how they become vessels for conveying profound truths about the human condition.

The intertwining of animality, human anguish, and bestialization within these narratives prompts a critical exploration of cultural, social, and political contexts. As we embark on this literary journey, we aim to decipher the nuanced ways in which the two authors employ animalistic imagery to challenge societal norms, question power structures, and evoke a deeper understanding of the human experience. Through a comparative analysis of Abulhawa's and Jarrar's works, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on animality in literature, shedding light on its role in shaping narratives, challenging perceptions, and offering unique insights into the complexities of the human-animal dynamic.

From the broader canvas of identity and resistance in War-Torn Palestine, this study scrutinizes the intricate tapestry of animality within the context of contemporary Palestinian literature. Focusing on Abulhawa's novel *Against the Loveless World* and Jarrar's short story "The Story of My Building," the study embarks on a literary exploration that transcends geographical boundaries, weaving together the threads of identity, resistance, and the environment. In the shadow of conflict, Palestinian literature has become a powerful tool for conveying the nuanced experiences of a people navigating the complexities of war, exile, and resilience. As the study delves into the animalistic motifs within these narratives, it becomes a lens through which we examine the intersection of ecology, identity, and resistance.

Abulhawa's sweeping narrative unfolds against the backdrop of political turmoil, and Jarrar's succinct exploration resonates within the urban landscape. Through the lens of animality, the study seeks to decipher how the two authors employ literary devices to navigate the socio-political landscape of Palestine, shedding light on the symbiotic relationship between human and non-human actors. Furthermore, it aligns with the overarching goal of understanding the ecocritical dimensions of Arab diasporic fiction. By engaging with these literary works, we not only dissect the representation of animality but also contribute to a more profound comprehension of how literature intertwines with environmental concerns and identity formation in the Palestinian context.

### 1.1 Literature Review

The thematic exploration of hybridity, nostalgia, and Orientalism in Arab literature offers significant insights into identity, belonging, and resistance. Yasmina Khadra's *What the Day Owes the Night* examines the protagonist Younes' hybrid identity during French colonialism in Algeria, highlighting his struggle with cultural ambivalence and unhomeliness. Drawing on Bhabha's postcolonial theories, the study demonstrates how Younes' hybridity functions as a means of


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survival rather than an act of disloyalty, ultimately portraying the complexities of negotiating between opposing cultural worlds (Zuraikat and Sahnoune, 2023). Similarly, Zeyn Joukhadar's *the Map of Salt and Stars* delve into the concept of nostalgia as a form of resistance, focusing on Nour's diasporic journey and her longing for her deceased father amid the trauma of displacement and war. By analyzing the interplay between memory, weather, and identity, the study underscores nostalgia's restorative power and its role in fostering resilience and a sense of belonging for diasporic individuals (Mohrem and Zuraikat, 2023). On the other hand, the portrayal of Arabs in Ahdaf Soueif's *the Map of Love* and Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* reveals the problematic reinforcement of Western stereotypes. Utilizing Said's *Orientalism*, the study critiques these authors for perpetuating depictions of Arabs as backward and submissive, arguing that such narratives prioritize Western acceptance over authentic representation, complicating diaspora literature's role in countering cultural misconceptions (Walid and Zuraikat, 2023). Together, these works reflect the nuanced ways Arab authors navigate themes of identity, resistance, and representation, shedding light on the complex dynamics between the East and West. However, while these articles address resistance and identity in diasporic literature, none engages with the theme of animality or employs an ecocritical framework, leaving a gap that this study seeks to fill.

**The Human-Animal Divide: Philosophical Debates, Literary Representations, and Postcolonial Reflections**

The question of the human-animal divide has deep philosophical roots, beginning with Aristotle's *The Animal History* (350 BC). Aristotle's concept of the "Great Chain of Being" places humans above animals due to rationality, memory, and recollection, though he does not deny the shared essence of being animals (5-7). However, thinkers like René Descartes have solidified a stark boundary, defining animals as non-sentient automata lacking consciousness and rational souls. Consequently, animals have traditionally been denied feelings, such as pain or pleasure (Harrison, 1992). Philosophers like Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas followed Descartes' demarcation, while others, including Peter Singer and Tom Regan, advocated for animal liberation and rights. Later theorists like Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway shifted focus to the cultural representation of animals, emphasizing analysis over division (Gerard, 136).

Karl P. Wentersdo (1984) examines animal symbolism in Shakespeare's "sombre dramas," such as *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, in which animal and bird imagery reflects human greed, cruelty, and immorality. Sparrows, goats, and horses, for instance, reveal concealed human connotations (Wentersdo, 348). John Berger's "Why Look at Animals?" contends that the human-animal relationship has historically been more robust than today [i]. Laurie Shannon agrees, linking human-animal interactions to bestiary traditions that attribute specific traits to animals, such as the elephant's memory or the fox's cunning (Shannon, 472). This 'writing of humanimals'[ii] remains a recurring literary approach to explore the intricate connections between humans and animals.

Benjamin Klein, in "Animals, Animism, and Biosemiotics: Reimagining the Species Boundary in the Novels of Mia Couto," argues that Couto's works examine human-animal relationships within postcolonial contexts. These narratives highlight 'cultural and ecological transformation' through encounters that challenge speciesism and intersect with race, gender, and class issues (Klein, 2019). In Palestinian literature, animals and animal imagery become tools to depict the hardships faced under Israeli colonization. They symbolically represent the anguish, resistance, and external oppression experienced by Palestinians.


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In postcolonial literature, animal imagery is often intricately linked to the themes of dehumanization, resistance, and the fragmentation of identity. Bhabha's work, particularly in *The Location of Culture*, offers a theoretical lens through which these animal representations can be further explored. Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" and "the third space" illuminates the shifting identities that emerge in colonial contexts, where the binary distinctions between colonizer and colonized are constantly renegotiated. Animal imagery in such settings can serve as a vehicle for expressing the liminal space where identities are not fully human or fully animal but exist in a state of flux, much like the postcolonial subject itself.

Through Bhabha's framework, we can read the animal imagery in Abulhawa's and Jarrar's works as symbolic of this hybridized condition. The depiction of animals in the context of colonization does not merely mirror the oppression faced by the Palestinian people; it exposes the ongoing negotiation of what it means to be human within a system designed to dehumanize. Animals thus become a reflection of the colonized subject's struggle for agency and resistance, a key aspect of Bhabha's theory of "cultural difference" in postcolonial discourse. This interplay between animality and identity highlights how colonized peoples, much like the animals they are often compared to, must constantly navigate the boundaries of what is human, what is not, and how they reclaim their humanity in a world that seeks to deny it.

Kelly Oliver, in *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human* (2009), critiques Western philosophical traditions regarding animals. Examining Rousseau's work, Oliver describes three human identities tied to animals: the savage hunter, the barbaric herdsman, and the civilized farmer, with civilization marked by refraining from consuming animals (Noll, 2011). However, she showcases Rousseau's omission of killing animals to harm humans indirectly—a practice evident in colonized regions. Oliver's reading of Starobinski also emphasizes ethical obligations towards nature, rooted in a conversation between humans and their environment. Starobinski argues that our ability to listen and respond to animals fosters moral responsibility: "Ethical obligation begins in the conversation between man and nature" (Oliver, 73). Louise Westling's "Literature, the Environment, and the Question of the Posthuman" discusses how posthumanism challenges human exceptionalism and dualistic thinking that separates humans from nature. Jean François Lyotard's *the Inhuman* questions whether humanity is losing its defining qualities, critiquing Cartesian views that elevate humans above animals. Derrida's concept of "Animot Posthumanism" refutes a monolithic notion of "animal," emphasizing the diversity and agency of life forms. Observing his cat, Derrida reflects on the "abyssal limit of the human," questioning philosophical traditions asserting human superiority (Westling, 29-32). He states:

the edge of the so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than 'the Animal' or 'Animal Life,' there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, […] a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death (399).

Derrida here challenges the binary distinction between humans and animals, emphasizing a complex, interconnected multiplicity of life forms. It suggests that the boundaries between organic and inorganic, life and death, are fluid, reflecting the intricate interdependence within the living world. Similarly, Heidegger posits humans as caretakers of Being, tasked with preserving Earth. While granting humans a unique linguistic capacity, he maintains their distinction from animals.


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The critical works reviewed above show that the philosophical and literary exploration of human-animal relationships reveals the complexity of these interactions. By analyzing works of fiction like those of Abulhawa and Jarrar, this study underscores how animals in literature can symbolize resistance, identity, and share suffering in postcolonial and colonized contexts. By examining the way, the representation of animals in the two works reflect inner anxieties and external turmoil in the Palestinian context, the study highlights the significant role the human-animal relationship plays in the birth and continuity of resistance in colonized, war-torn lands.

**Resistance, Nature, and the Animal: The Interwoven Struggles in Abulhawa's Against the Loveless World"**

Abulhawa opens her novel *Against the Loveless World* with Nahr describing the cell she lives in.

Light comes through the small glass-block window high on the wall reached only by the many-legged crawling creatures that also reside here. I am fond the spiders and ants which have set up separate dominions and manage to avoid each other in our shared nine-square-meter universe. (Abulhawa 2020)

The significance of the role animals plays in Nahr's narrative increases as the novel proceeds. As Nahr moves through the world of both imprisonment and liberation, the notion of boundaries becomes fluid, mirroring Bhabha's concept of **hybridity**. Nahr's growing awareness of her connection to the animals, especially when she reaches Palestine—an area brimming with life—represents the merging of human and non-human experiences. These animals are not simply 'other' or alien but represent a **third space**, where distinctions blur and Nahr begins to question the primacy of human experience. She tries to reach the window of her prison cell once, so she stacks everything she has in her cell (including 23 books the guards had given her), and she stretches as far as she can on the stack but only reaches the cobweb. (Abulhawa 2020) . This highlights the intricate and fluid nature of life's boundaries, emphasizing that the distinctions between human and animal, life and death, or organic and inorganic are not rigid but are instead characterized by a heterogeneous multiplicity. It challenges the binary oppositions traditionally used to define these realms, suggesting that they are interconnected through complex relationships that defy simple categorization. This perspective aligns with critical discourses in posthumanism and ecological studies, which seek to unravel these entanglements and examine the continuum of existence beyond reductive classifications.

Later, when Nahr reaches Palestine, her encounter with Bilal and his family symbolizes a pivotal moment where cultural identities, both human and animal, are subject to mimicry and redefinition. **Mimicry**, according to Bhabha, involves the reproduction of cultural elements, but in a way that is altered and subversive. In this sense, the sheep in the pasture, which are traditionally seen as symbols of Palestinian livelihood, now serve as a reflection of the land's **colonial mimicry**—echoing the attempts of the colonizers to control, yet also the act of the sheep becoming symbolic of Palestinian endurance and survival under the gaze of the occupiers (Abulhawa, 2020). Here, as all through the novel, 'sheep' refers not only to an animal which lives in Palestine. It stands in metaphorical comparison suggesting the most profound metonymy of parts of Palestine representing the whole land: people, animals, land, buildings, and plants. Jandal, Bilal's full-time shepherd, together with Bilal, "sheared the sheep once a year for wool, which they sold to local garment factories. During Eid and in local special occasions, people would buy lamps for sacrifice" (*ibid*, 157). These sheep are not mere animals for the Palestinians, but a source of living, as well


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as a means by which they worship Allah in their Eid. This explains why Bilal insists "on hiring his own butcher to perform halal ritual traditions for his sheep. Because people terrify these animals before killing them" (*ibid*, 157). Bilal seems fully aware of their need of the sheep, however; he doesn't deny that they "are nation onto themselves, [and] they deserve to be free" (*ibid*, 157).

Bilal's unorthodox view of animals represents a **resistance** to traditional human-animal hierarchies. His deep respect for the sheep subverts Aristotle's **Chain of Being**, a view that Bhabha might describe as an assertion of cultural and ideological power over the 'other.' Bilal's refusal to see animals as inferior reflects a resistance against the structures that seek to define and limit animal existence. His actions, particularly in providing the sheep with sacred treatment before slaughter, challenge both the human-centric worldview and the colonial structure that has sought to strip the land and its creatures of their value. Until she meets Bilal, Nahr has been Aristotelian, as "the primacy of humans was only one assumption [she] had never questioned..." (*ibid*, 157). After observing Bilal's strong connection to and profound respect for the sheep, Nahr begins to challenge her deeply ingrained beliefs. She starts to recognize the interconnectedness of different life forms in Palestine and the ethical responsibility Palestinians feel towards other creatures. This realization marks a pivotal transformation in Nahr's character, as she moves from an anthropocentric worldview to one that acknowledges the intrinsic value and agency of animals. Through this shift, Nahr not only reevaluates her relationship with animals but also begins to see them as integral threads in the fabric of Palestinian identity and resilience.

As she moves to Palestine, Nahr experiences a change in her attitude towards nature. After the noise of traffic, street vendors and construction and the buzz of streetlights she has got used to in Kuwait and Amman, she starts to wake up to the sounds of birds and wind chimes and is lulled at night by the calls of wolves and jackals. Nahr feels confused at the beginning, as she is not used to being in close contact with nature. Then, gradually she makes use of every single contact with nature, "breathing deeply and inherently in the mornings," (*ibid,*159) later realizing how "limited [her] world had been" as she has been deprived of such blessings. Her adventures with Bilal in the Palestinian landscapes make her learn how to identify individual plants which they encounter, and their "culinary uses and medical value." (*ibid*)

In his last seminars, particularly "The Animal That Therefore I am" (1977) and "The Beast and the Sovereign" (2001-2002), Derrida argues that Man is a living creature who has granted himself the right to possess language with which to speak of the animal in a single voice; and with which to pose himself as the Sovereign over it (Derrida, 2009). Derrida defines the Animal [iii] as "an immense group, a single fundamentally homogenous set that man has the right to designate as the other or the opposite" (408). In other words, Man has given himself the right to corral all other living beings under the concept of the Animal other. In fact, Derrida forges the word "Animot" [iv] to designate everything which man does not consider as his fellow brother (400). In the novel, Derrida's analogy is stratified through the close connection Bilal feels towards his sheep. Bilal is the Man; the sheep are the beast. Nonetheless, the difference between Man the sovereign and the beast in Bilal's case is dissolved, for Bilal is "reading under an old olive tree, resting his head on the belly of a sleeping sheep, Man and beast, completing each other in perfect laziness" (Abulhawa 2020). Through portraying how close Bilal is to animal life in the Palestinian environment, Abulhawa manages to revoke the binary opposition between Man and his environment, showcasing the harmonious interaction between Man and animal and minimising the vengeful bond between them. In the novel, this harmony is reflected in the positive impact Bilal's relationship with his sheep has on Nahr who finds no more content than lying with Bilal in the


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silence of the hills and enjoying the "amplified small sounds…sheep chewing, roaming, bleating, breathing…", expressing her love of the hills and her intense bond with this land (*Ibid*, 186). Abulhawa expands this concord to include the bond between Nahr and Bilal. They do not only mesh with one another, but they also mesh with their surroundings, including the animals around them. Even the two baby goats which play next to them can sense the love between Nahr and Bilal. They stop in their tracks and make funny sounds, as if reacting to Nahr holding Bilal's hand and "as if they were talking about [them]" (*Ibid*, 188).

On a different occasion, Bilal expresses his amazement at how the sheep rise and hurry toward their shepherd Jandal, whenever he calls to them: ""It amazes me every time to see this." Bilal watches the flock. "Sheep are nearly Blind, but they can distinguish sounds. Jandal's voice is their security. They will always go to him. I could make the same call, but they wouldn't respond."" (Abulhawa 2020). Security. This is the word Abulhawa uses to describe the bond between Jandal and his sheep. Security is also apparent when Bilal explains that he has insisted on hiring his own butcher to perform halal ritual traditions for his sheep before sacrifice. He wants them to be sacred before being killed, by making his best not to terrify them before killing them in Eid, and by emphasizing the need to "adhere to halal requirements" by butchers (*ibid*, 157), which secure a sacrifice without terror. Later, Bilal expresses his aversion toward eating a lot of meat, as "sheep, cows, fish, whales, goats…deserve to be free" (*ibid*, 157). In the novel, Bilal is portrayed as a man who is merciful with animals, and that makes Nahr question "the primacy of humans", an assumption which she has never questioned before meeting Bilal (*ibid*, 157).

Successfully, Abulhawa dismantles this line of demarcation between Man and Animals, when she depicts the relation between the Palestinians and animals, categorizing them in an ethics -charged relationship. Yet, Abulhawa problematizes this harmony between Man and animals when Man is introduced as a colonizer. She describes how the Israeli colonizer disturbs the peaceful co-existence of the Palestinian and animals. This is mainly manifested when "Jandal al-Ramli", Bilal's shepherd, is killed by the Israeli army. The colonizer does not only ruin the life of the Palestinians but all that surrounds them: the animals, the plants, and the whole environment. In this act of violence, Abulhawa explicitly illustrates the socio-political implications of animality—how the systematic disruption of life for Palestinians extends beyond the human, encompassing the ecology and symbolic order of the land Nahr hears the news while she is styling a customer's hair: ""'…a simple shepherd. The Zionist authorities declare that he has been killed for wandering with his flock into a military firing zone. The residents, however, do not believe this version of the story. The village mukhtar says there is no way this has been an accident, because the Israeli troops have also shot fourteen of his animals and all of them have been found where they normally graze. Doctors say it appears he was shot at point-blank range. Meanwhile in Hebron…'"" (*ibid*, 210)

The sweet, kind, gentle Jandal, according to Nahr's description, is gone. Jandal has not only been kind and gentle with Nahr, but he has been also sweet and gentle to his flock. Nahr remembers the baby goats which were playing next to Jandal one day, and "his flock which responded to his voice and to the music of his ney" (*ibid*, 2012). Nahr thinks all this is gone too. The colonizer does not only ruin the life of the Palestinians, but all that surrounds them: the animals, the plants and the whole environment. In the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida studies the behavior and the status of the wolf tracing an analogy with *The Wolf and the Lamb*. He argues that the wolf is a cruel and a barbarous creature "full of rage", "ready to launch punitive, even preventive or vengeful expeditions" (Derrida, 2009). Abulhawa adopts this binary


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in her novel as well, portraying the Israeli soldiers as “the wolf” and the sheep as “the lamb” literally, and the Palestinians as “the lamb” metaphorically.

It is not only the killing of humans and animals which severs the relationship between Palestinians and the animals living in that environment. The killing of the animals alludes to the death of a Palestinian tradition. Nahr states:

Jandal had given continuity to an ancient Palestinian tradition. That was also disappearing, and maybe it was the point of killing Jandal and his animals. He knew those hills like he knew his own body. He would not have wandered into a firing zone, even though Israel endlessly carves out more and more Palestinian spaces for their military training. It was deliberate, Jandal had been murdered. And as with thousands of Palestinians just like him, there would be no accountability for his killers…. The ceaseless accumulation of injustice made me want to fight the world, to lash to somehow, scream. (*ibid*, 212)

Abulhawa demonstrates how Palestinian ecology is at a constant soreness and anguish. The almond trees are also dying. “Israel rationed water to Palestinians, especially farmers, and would then move to confiscate farmers and groves of dying trees for being neglected.” (247) This fierce aggression practiced by the Zionists towards the land extends to include the dead as well, as the army attacks Jandal’s funeral procession the day after they kill him (212).

The relationship between the Israeli colonizer and Palestinians in the novel can be examined as another form of human-animal relationship. The traditional binary opposition of Human and animal not only describes the relationship between the Israeli colonizer and animals but also describes the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians as one charged with power relations and non-ethical implications. In the novel, this inequivalent relationship is represented as a violent hierarchy, in which the colonizer rules over, dominates the colonized, and violates the minimal rights of those animals, and of the Palestinian people by extension. In *Against the Loveless World*, Abulhawa’s use of animal imagery frequently blurs the boundaries between human and non-human, challenging anthropocentric perspectives and reinforcing the interconnectedness of all beings. Calarco’s *Zoographies: The Question of Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* provides a critical framework for unpacking these depictions, particularly through its interrogation of the "species boundary" as a construct that reinforces human exceptionalism. Calarco critiques the anthropocentric tendency to define animals solely in contrast to human attributes, a notion Abulhawa subverts by portraying animals not as passive symbols but as active participants in the emotional and symbolic fabric of her narrative. For instance, the recurring imagery of birds in the novel evokes themes of entrapment and liberation, with the protagonist often likening her own experiences of confinement to the caged existence of these creatures. This parallelism underscores the shared vulnerability of all beings under systems of domination and control, whether human or non-human.

Calarco’s emphasis on the "question of the animal" also sheds light on how Abulhawa employs animal imagery to critique structural violence. In the novel, animals are not merely metaphors but serve as agents that reflect the dehumanization faced by Palestinians under occupation. The protagonist’s observation of animals struggling to adapt to urban destruction mirrors her own alienation in a world that denies her humanity. By aligning human anguish with animal suffering, Abulhawa repositions animals as co-sufferers and witnesses to the same oppressive forces. This alignment echoes Calarco’s assertion that dismantling anthropocentrism requires acknowledging the intrinsic value of non-human lives and their interconnectedness with


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human experiences. Abulhawa's narrative, therefore, not only amplifies the voices of the marginalized but also invites a rethinking of ethical responsibilities across species boundaries, challenging readers to confront their own complicity in perpetuating hierarchies of domination

When the Israeli colonizer attacks Bilal's house, "four soldiers scoop Bilal from the ground, dragging him along the path toward the road, each holding one of Bilal's limbs, his limp head bobbing with their steps" (252). Ghassan is arrested later, and "they were being harmed in ways" no one could "bear to imagine" (254). They are deprived of their basic human rights. There is no charge, no trial. They are both held in administrative detention, which is renewed twice at six-month intervals. Neither Bilal nor Ghassan is charged with a crime (*ibid*). They are simply arrested and imprisoned for being Palestinians.

Abulhawa's depiction of such incidents shows that the humiliating treatment Palestinians are exposed to at the hands of the Israelis is similar to the logic behind the traditional opposition of man/animal opposition. The colonizer treats the Palestinians in the same demeaning way which Derrida associates with animals. Derrida asserts that humans are living beings who have assumed the right to position themselves as sovereign over them (Derrida, 2009). He describes the Animal [v] as a vast group, a "fundamentally homogeneous set" that humans have the right to label as "the other or the opposite" (408). Read in the light of Derrida's theory of animals and animality, Abulhawa's depiction of the colonizer-colonized relationship in her novel can be understood. In the chapter entitled 'Harvest', Nahr elucidates comprehensively the process of olive harvest in the olive groves, in which all Palestinian generations participate. Similar to all life situations, the Zionist colonizer jumps into the scene. To the Palestinians, it is not a surprise anymore:

Can something expect still be a surprise? We knew that Israelis were especially menacing during the harvest season. They know olives have been the mainstay and centerpiece of our social, economic, and cultural presence for millennia, and it infuriated them-still does-to watch the unbroken continuity of our indigenous traditions. So, they came with their big guns, and the colonial logic of interlopers who cannot abide our presence or our joy. Two shots rang out. (Abulhawa 2020).

Hajjeh Um Muhammad collapses, Bilal is bound and dragged away, Faisal is arrested, Wadee carries a boy who gets shot in the abdomen. The eight-year-old boy dies the next day, and streets are mourning as he is carried to be buried. The surrounding environment, which is deeply impacted by the brutal actions of the Israeli army, also mourns the events. "Clouds dimmed the sky… The sound of plopping olives was bitter and mournful. Hajjeh Um Muhammad… had recovered physically, but heavy grief anchored her to her bed" (*ibid*, 264). The collective grief of the people is mirrored in the anguish of the land itself, as though the olive trees and soil have born witness to the pain inflicted upon their caretakers. This profound bond between the land and its people becomes both a source of resilience and a reminder of the relentless suffering they endured. "…[B]ut to stand and watch the land burn would have been more painful than the burns on our skin and smoke in our lungs" (ibid, 265).

It is interesting how Abulhawa shows the Palestinians as the real protectors of the land and the environment despite all the destruction the Israeli colonizer has caused: "the cousin who had taken over Jandal's job brought the sheep to graze regularly to ensure the soil would get enough nitrogen" (*ibid*, 271). These very few lines in the middle of the narrative highlight the deep connection between the Palestinians and their land, as depicted by Abulhawa. By emphasizing the practical knowledge and care they have for the environment, such as using sheep to naturally enrich


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the soil with nitrogen, Abulhawa portrays the Palestinians not just as inhabitants, but as true stewards of the land. This relationship suggests a profound sense of belonging and responsibility that goes challenges the presence of the Israeli occupation, reinforcing the idea that Palestinian identity is intricately tied to the landscape and its well-being. Through this intimate relationship, Abulhawa is able to stress how rooted Palestinians are in their ancestral land. Later, Abulhawa writes:

Bilal would take his shift at the bakery. Later all of us might gather at our house, or we'd go hiking and spend time with the flock (Bilal S had eventually gone back to visiting Jandal's animals and their spending maybe would take a few clients at the salon, go shopping, play cards. Then time with new shepherd). Fridays were sacred. (*ibid*, 315)

Abulhawa's words underscore the centrality of animality as a motif in the novel, showing how integrated everyday life of Palestinians is with the land and its rhythms. Abulhawa's description of Bilal's work at the bakery, the gatherings, hiking, and spending time with the flock paints a picture of a community deeply connected not only to each other but also to the landscape and animals that shape their daily lives.

Abulhawa's portrayal of "sacred Fridays" and the time spent with animals and in nature ties into a larger theme of the land being a source of identity and spiritual grounding. This lifestyle is not just about survival; it is a way of living that embraces the environment and honors the cyclical routines that animals and people share. By portraying animals as an integral part of the activities which Palestinians participate in, Abulhawa suggests that this connection to the land and animals forms a foundational part of Palestinian life. Through this depiction, she highlights the fact that the Palestinian experience is intertwined with a particular landscape and way of life—an existence where human activities, animal caretaking, and respect for the environment are interwoven into a holistic and culturally significant rhythm.

Abulhawa illustrates another layer to this connection as the novel approaches its end. The interplay between the Palestinians' close relationship to the environment and the theme of resistance becomes increasingly pronounced, especially in the section which delves deeper into Ghassan's unconventional resistance, where plants become tools of defiance: "some of the arrowheads were poisoned with plant oils, all of which were found in Ghassan's home" (*ibid*, 339-40). This suggests that the very act of nurturing plants not only represents a connection to the land but also embodies a form of resistance against oppression. Through these plants which the soldiers fail to recognize as sources of power, Abulhawa highlights how deeply rooted resilience can be manifested in unexpected ways. Overall, Abulhawa ascertains the reader that the Palestinian experience is intertwined with a particular landscape and way of life - an existence where human activities, animal caretaking, and respect for the environment are interwoven into a holistic and culturally significant rhythm.

On the contrary, Abulhawa describes the occupier as destructive towards the land and environment, highlighting a disregard for preservation. It is not merely nature that bears the scars of occupation, but also the very infrastructure and spirit of the city. As the novel reveals, the occupier's impact goes beyond the land, reaching deeply into the urban fabric and institutions that sustain daily life and cultural identity. Cities are bombed to serve political ends, with Gaza's airport — a rare emblem of Palestinian autonomy — left in ruins as runways are torn apart. Schools and universities, the foundations of knowledge and progress, are reduced to rubble. Essential records, from population databases to student statistics, are seized, stripping people of their identities and


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histories. And with the imposition of harsh curfews, residents are effectively imprisoned in their own homes, deprived of freedom and subjected to the relentless control of military forces. Through these acts, the occupation systematically dismantles both the natural and human-made environments, leaving a landscape marked by profound loss and resilience. (*ibid*, 296-97)

These brutal actions are further justified through divisive narratives, which dehumanize the occupied population and reinforce hatred. As Bilal states bitterly, "These people hate each other. If they didn't have us to brutalize, they'd be killing each other" (*ibid*, 315). This perspective not only reveals the deep-seated contempt but also reflects an intentional denial of the people's unity and resilience. By perpetuating such beliefs, the occupier denies any humanity or worth in those they subjugate, further fueling the cycles of destruction and repression.

Lastly, in her acknowledgment at the end of the novel, Abulhawa reflects on a profound personal connection to solitude and the natural world, highlighting her emotional relationships with animals. This intimate bond underscores the theme of animality, illustrating how deep connections with the environment can foster resilience and resistance. As she expresses her gratitude for the unwavering friendship of a cherished figure (*ibid*, 363), she emphasizes the importance of appreciating the world around us, both human and non-human. This acknowledgment not only serves as a dedication to her memory but also reinforces the idea that our relationships with nature and animals can shape our identities and inspire our struggles against adversity. Her sentiment resonates deeply, reminding us that love and connection, though sometimes feeling insufficient, are vital in our journey toward understanding our place within the broader tapestry of life.

### Symbolic Resonance of the Dovecote: Loss, Resistance, and the Palestinian Struggle

Jarrar's "The Story of My Building" poignantly embodies the theme of animality by portraying how violent conflict disrupts the fundamental human connection to nature, environment, and personal space. The tale of Muhannad, a young Palestinian boy whose aspirations are entangled with the promise of a dovecote, underscores how war and displacement sever individuals from their environments, reducing their existence to one of mere survival. This aligns with the thematic focus of this research, where animality is explored not only as a metaphor for human resilience but also as a manifestation of the bestialization imposed by conflict. In the ruins of Muhannad's home and the demolished potential for his dovecote, Jarrar subtly parallels the degradation of human dignity with the destruction of natural and animal habitats. By centering on a child's broken dreams, Jarrar reveals the raw vulnerability of those who, like animals, are subject to forces beyond their control. This story serves as a profound reflection on how war erodes the boundaries between human and animal states of being, pushing individuals into environments where they must navigate trauma in ways that blur distinctions between humanity and animality. Thus, "The Story of My Building" resonates deeply with the core questions of this study, illuminating how literature uses the collapse of human-environment connections to comment on the profound impacts of violence on identity and existence.

Furthermore, central to Jarrar's story is the symbolic presence of the dove, a bird traditionally associated with freedom, peace, and purity, yet tragically inaccessible in Muhannad's world. As Gonzàlez notes, birds are powerful symbols of freedom, love, and rebirth, often serving as heavenly messengers or embodiments of flying souls and prophecies (Gonzàlez, 2000). For Muhannad, the promise of a dovecote represents a fragile sanctuary and a link to these positive connotations, hinting at an innocence and hope for peace amid turmoil. Yet, the story's climax -


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the destruction of Muhannad’s building and the loss of his dovecote materials- shatters these symbolic aspirations. His dreams, like the delicate freedom of a bird in flight, are grounded by the brutal realities of war and displacement. This links deeply with the thematic focus of this research, where animality is explored not only as a metaphor for resilience but also as an emblem of how conflict reduces individuals to bare survival.

As Gonzàlez suggests in his article *“Broken Wings of Freedom: Bird Imagery in Toni Morrison’s Novels,”* birds are often used as a metaphor for freedom and spiritual transcendence, carrying within them an inherent promise of liberation and renewal (Gonzàlez, 2000). The dove in Jarrar’s story, much like the birds in Morrison’s works, takes on a layered significance. In the context of Muhannad’s struggles, it represents not only hope but also the devastating fragility of that hope in the face of violent, oppressive forces. As the dove’s flight is often thwarted, so are the aspirations of those living under occupation, trapped in a cycle where their dreams of peace and autonomy are continuously shattered.

Furthermore, the destruction of Muhannad’s dovecote reflects not only the loss of physical shelter but also the erasure of dreams and identity tied to the land. The dove, as the primary bird in Jarrar's narrative, embodies the Palestinian spirit and longing for peace amidst turmoil. Its unattainable flight parallels the constrained lives of Palestinians, whose aspirations are grounded by the realities of occupation. By interweaving themes of animality, identity, and resistance, Jarrar underscores how even the smallest symbols—like a bird—can reflect the broader socio-political landscape of oppression and resilience. The symbolic destruction of the dovecote resonates as a microcosm of the larger Palestinian struggle: a people’s relentless fight to preserve their identity, culture, and ties to the land despite systemic attempts at erasure. In the short story, the motif of the dove, representative of the Palestinian people and their aspirations, intertwines with themes of animality, revealing the complex relationships between identity, trauma, and the environment in Jarrar's work.

Investigating the implications of Jarrar’s intertextual approach alongside her poignant portrayal of a young boy’s experience contribute to a deeper understanding of how Arab diasporic literature serves as a medium for expressing resistance against violence, the Israeli occupation in this case, and articulating the human condition through the lens of animality. This connection underscores the significance of literature as a means of bearing witness to suffering while exploring the symbolic roles animals play in reflecting the broader socio-political landscape.

In this context, the dove becomes more than just a symbol of peace; it reflects a yearning for connection to the natural world, which is continuously disrupted by violence. Muhannad’s lost dovecote and the unattainable flight of the dove reflect how environmental destruction and the degradation of personal space sever individuals from their aspirations, pushing them into an existence more akin to animals navigating a hostile landscape. In the same way, by juxtaposing the idealized freedom of the bird with Muhannad’s confined and shattered environment, Jarrar’s narrative illuminates how literature uses the collapse of human-environment connections to comment on the profound impacts of violence on identity and existence.

In “The Story of My Building”, the dove transcends its role as a mere bird and emerges as a powerful symbol of the Palestinian identity and collective yearning for homeland. The dovecote, which Muhannad dreams of building, serves as a poignant representation of Palestine, embodying not only the physical land that has been marred by conflict but also the cultural and emotional ties that bind the Palestinian people to their heritage. Just as the dove signifies peace and hope, the


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image of the dovecote evokes the dream of a secure and nurturing space where these ideals can flourish. However, the destruction of Muhannad's building and the loss of his promised dovecote poignantly reflect the realities faced by Palestinians who endure the continual threat of dispossession and erasure of their existence. The dovecote, once a symbol of aspiration and connection to the land, becomes a stark reminder of what has been lost, mirroring the historical trauma experienced by a people whose identity is intertwined with their homeland. This connection deepens the narrative's exploration of animality and environment, illustrating how the violence inflicted upon the land also devastates the spirit of its inhabitants, who, like the dove, seek a place to belong and to soar free. In this way, Jarrar's story resonates as a powerful allegory for the resilience of the Palestinian spirit, intertwining themes of loss, identity, and the enduring hope for a future where peace can reign, much like the flight of a dove.

In the article entitled "From "My Dovecote" to "My Building": Intertextuality in Jarrar's "The Story of My Building"" (2022), Yousef Abu Amrieh explores Jarrar's short story which draws on Isaac Babel's "The Story of My Dovecote" to depict the harsh realities faced by Palestinians due to ongoing Israeli military actions in Gaza. Abu Amrieh highlights Jarrar's use of intertextuality to create parallels between the historical experiences of Russian Jews during the pogroms and the contemporary struggles of Palestinians. Both stories feature ten-year-old protagonists who experience trauma and loss due to violence, emphasizing shared histories of victimization. While Babel's protagonist retains his home after a pogrom, Jarrar's character, Muhannad, returns to find his building destroyed, symbolizing the deeper loss faced by Palestinians. The article argues that Jarrar's narrative serves as a commentary on the destructive impact of war and the ongoing plight of her people, using a concise storytelling format to effectively convey these themes.

The themes presented in Jarrar's text resonate deeply with the overarching focus of this research, which examines the representations of animality in contemporary Arab-Anglo literature. Jarrar's story not only draws upon the historical trauma of the Jewish experience in Babel's narrative but also foregrounds the particular plight of the Palestinian people, paralleling their struggles with that of the Jewish community facing pogroms in Tsarist Russia. This intertextuality enriches the narrative, as the protagonist's dream of a dovecote—a symbol often associated with peace, freedom, and hope—is shattered by violence, mirroring the aspirations of a displaced population.

Abu Amrieh suggests that these parallel invites readers to view Palestinian anguish as part of a broader, recurring pattern of human suffering and resilience. (Abu Amrieh, 2022). A pertinent question that arises in this context is how does Jarrar's explicit homage to Babel's narrative contribute to the objectives of this study? Abu Amrieh explains,

> while Babel's protagonist's house remains intact, in Jarrar's story the protagonist's family along with several other Palestinian families become homeless and displaced since the building in which they live is reduced into rubble. There is an expansion in destruction from the dovecote to the building of the titles and from a house for birds to a living space for people. (ibid,194)

In other words, the shift from Babel's small, symbolic dovecote to Jarrar's building reflects an expansion in the scale of destruction. While Babel's protagonist's house remains intact, Jarrar portrays a more devastating reality where entire families are displaced as their homes are reduced to rubble. This transition amplifies the impact of violence, moving from a personal loss to a


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widespread human tragedy, symbolizing the larger, more devastating consequences of displacement and occupation faced by Palestinians.

Nonetheless, the motif of the dovecote is also employed in Jarrar's narrative as a symbol in the context of animality and the human condition. In "The Story of My Building," the promise to build a "real dovecote" for the protagonist signifies a longing for a safe, nurturing space, one that contrasts with the violence and upheaval surrounding them. The father's words -"We will build you a real dovecote. From wood. We shall paint it and there will be enough nests inside for ten pigeons" (Jarrar, 2016)- invoke an image of tranquility and order, where the pigeons, symbols of peace and freedom, find refuge in a constructed home.

However, the dovecote also carries an implicit connection to animality, linking the human desire for stability to the precarious lives of the pigeons, confined to a small, controlled space. In the context of Jarrar's story, this motif highlights the fragility of such peace. The protagonist, along with his family and other Palestinians, is subjected to the brutal forces of displacement, which transform them from human beings with agency to marginalized, vulnerable figures—much like animals trapped in a confined space. This transition from human anguish to a near-bestial state of survival under occupation aligns with the broader theme of bestialization in Jarrar's short story, where the human condition is characterised by suffering and dehumanization. The dovecote, initially a symbol of hope, thus becomes a poignant reminder of the ways in which the violence and trauma of war strip individuals of their humanity, pushing them into a state of survival akin to that of animals in captivity. Later, Muhannad converses to Abu Allam:

I told him the men were building me a dovecote, and he said he would have wood and paint for them early next week. I asked him why it would take that long and he told me to look around me. "Things are terrible. Open your eyes." I did just as he said, glanced up and down the street, but all appeared as it always did. (Jarrar, 2016)

In this passage, the dovecote takes on a dual symbolism that deepens the themes of animality, human anguish, and bestialization. The protagonist's innocent request for a dovecote, a simple desire for a safe space, is met with the harsh reality of the environment around him. When Abu Allam responds, "Things are terrible. Open your eyes" (117), he is urging the protagonist to confront the broader context of their situation—an environment fraught with violence and destruction. Though the protagonist initially sees nothing out of the ordinary, Abu Allam's words signal the underlying sense of impending danger and upheaval that surrounds them, a constant reminder that their lives are precarious and vulnerable.

This interaction highlights a deeper layer of bestialization within the narrative. The dovecote, initially a symbol of hope and sanctuary, becomes a poignant metaphor for the fragile human condition under occupation. While the pigeons in the dovecote may find a degree of refuge, they are also confined, their freedom is limited. Similarly, the protagonist's family, like the pigeons, are trapped in a cycle of violence and displacement that robs them of their agency and autonomy. Abu Allam's warning about the surrounding "terrible" conditions signals not only a loss of innocence but also the dehumanizing effect of the violence they face. It illustrates how the everyday struggles and attempts to maintain normalcy, like building a dovecote, are overshadowed by the overwhelming presence of trauma and fear, reducing the human experience to a state of survival. By linking the imagery of confinement with the overarching theme of dehumanization, the narrative draws a striking parallelism between the symbolic and literal entrapment faced by the characters. Through this lens, the dovecote, once a symbol of hope, becomes a poignant reminder

of how the environment, much like the birds, limits the protagonist's ability to transcend the conditions imposed upon him, linking directly to the broader theme of bestialization in the story.

Shifting focus to the encounter with the Israeli soldier, the protagonist's experience further underscores the systemic dehumanization central to the narrative. Later, when the protagonist meets the Israeli soldier, his encounter serves as a chilling illustration of the dehumanizing and bestial treatment faced by Palestinians under occupation. When he attempts to return to his home, the soldier's response— "What a people. There's a devil in you. Didn't you hear me? No entrance here." (Jarrar, 2016) is a stark reminder of the violent and savage language used to dehumanize him and his people. This interaction echoes the earlier themes of entrapment, connecting the personal struggle for dignity to the broader systemic oppression faced by Palestinians. The soldier's words, equating the protagonist's identity with that of a devil, reinforce the portrayal of Palestinians as "other," their humanity stripped away and replaced by an almost animal-like monstrosity in the eyes of the soldier. This mirrors the broader theme of bestialization within Jarrar's narrative, where violence and oppression reduce the protagonist and his family to an existence of survival, denied basic human rights and treated as less than human.

The protagonist's observation of the soldier— "his booted legs looked like giant green beans in shiny black pods" (ibid, 171) —also introduces disturbing, almost animalistic imagery, blurring the lines between human and beast. This description highlights the soldier's figure not just as an authority but as one whose physicality evokes a sense of mechanical coldness, a faceless enforcer of brutal military control. Here, the narrative juxtaposes the human perspective of the protagonist with the grotesque dehumanization of his oppressor, amplifying the contrast between victim and enforcer. The "green tanks" and "booted legs" become monstrous, almost grotesque symbols of the army's dehumanizing power, stripping away any human empathy or morality.

By synthesizing these elements, the narrative bridges individual moments of suffering to the collective experience of oppression. In linking this scene to the theme of bestialization, we see how the Israeli soldier's violent and savage treatment of the protagonist—who is simply trying to return home—embodies a systemic attempt to dehumanize the Palestinian people. The protagonist's plea to return home is met with brutal resistance, reflecting how occupation forces strip away the human dignity of Palestinians, reducing them to mere obstacles in the soldiers' eyes. By illustrating the psychological and physical impacts of occupation, the narrative strengthens the connection between bestialization and systemic violence. This treatment, driven by a mindset that sees Palestinians as inherently "other" and beneath human regard, ties directly to the larger argument of the story, where both physical and emotional violence push the protagonist—and the broader Palestinian community—into a state of bestialization, struggling to retain their humanity amidst an oppressive, savage environment.

## 2. Conclusion

In concluding this study on animality, the human anguish, and bestialization in Abulhawa's Against the Loveless World and Jarrar's "The Story of My Building", the complex interweaving of animality, environmental decay, and human suffering emerges as a profound exploration of the dehumanizing forces at play in the Palestinian experience. Both works underscore the far-reaching effects of violence, extending beyond the physical to infiltrate the psychological, ecological, and societal dimensions, thereby disrupting the intrinsic connection between humans and their environment. Through their portrayals, both authors underscore how this disconnection fosters an


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environment where bestiality is projected upon those suffering, diminishing their humanity and reducing them to something less than fully human in the eyes of their oppressors.

Abulhawa's novel, through richly layered depictions of animality and land, reflects a visceral struggle for identity amid the relentless forces of occupation. Her characters' deep connection to the land symbolizes not only a literal attachment to home but also a broader, existential need to affirm their existence in a hostile environment which seeks to erase them. The Palestinian characters' intricate relationship with animals and nature embodies a reclaiming of life and humanity in defiance of systemic forces aiming to strip them of both. Abulhawa's portrayal emphasizes how this struggle is essential to their resilience, reinforcing the human spirit's power to find grounding in nature even amid dehumanization.

Similarly, in "The Story of My Building", Jarrar highlights the innocence and vulnerability of the protagonist's desire to create a dovecote, a place of sanctuary. Yet, this simple dream is rendered tragic as the boy is forced to confront a reality where his home and family are seen as dispensable and subjected to the brutality of occupation. *The symbolic destruction of the dovecote reflects the systematic dismantling of Palestinian homes and dreams,* where the protagonist is made to feel like an intruder in his own space, cast out and deemed animalistic by those in power. The soldier's remark about the "devil" in the protagonist encapsulates this act of bestialization, a projection that denies his innocence and turns him into a target rather than a human being. This transformation from victim to 'other' effectively mirrors the historical narratives of racialized and ethnic oppression, where entire groups have been dehumanized through similar projections of animality and savagery.

Together, the two works illuminate how literature can capture the nuanced, often brutal realities of occupation by framing the human condition in terms of its relation to animality and bestialization. Through their protagonists' eyes, Abulhawa and Jarrar expose the reader to the compounded anguish felt by those living under occupation: an anguish exacerbated by the relentless attempt to sever their connections to home, to animals, and ultimately, to their own humanity. By framing animality as both a symbol of oppression and a tool for resilience, the authors argue that Palestinian identity is inextricably linked to the natural and symbolic world, highlighting the socio-political dimensions of existence under occupation. This study, therefore, underscores the symbolic function of animals, the environment, and home as cornerstones of identity that occupation seeks to disrupt but which, paradoxically, become sources of strength and defiance.

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## Ethical Declarations

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of academic integrity and research ethics. Since the research did not involve human participants, there was no need for informed consent or other participant-related ethical procedures. However, all data sources and materials used in the research were handled responsibly and with due regard for intellectual


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property rights. The research process adhered to the principles of accuracy, transparency, and reliability to ensure the integrity of the findings.

## Data Availability Statement

The datasets collected and analyzed during this study are available from the researchers upon request.


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## Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare no conflict of interest.

## Author Contributions

- Shaima' Namroti and Eman Mukattash conceptualized and designed the study, in addition to collecting and analyzing the data.
- The first draft of the manuscript was written by Shaima' Namroti and Eman Mukattash.
- The researchers reviewed and edited the text and approved the final version for publication.

## Consent for Publication

The researchers agree to submit this paper for publication and await the editorial decision after the peer-review process, agreeing to its publication. They also confirm that this work has not been previously published and has not been submitted to any other journal for consideration.

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[i] John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" About Looking, New York: Pantheon, 1980. 3–30, Print.

[ii] Disclaimer: 'humanimals' is taken form Andrea Dara Cooper's article "Writing humanimals: Critical animal studies and Jewish studies", 2019.

[iii] Animal in capital letter refers to the category of Animot and when used in small letters it refers to the non-human animals.

[iv] In French grammar, the singular form of the word animal is "l"animal" while the plural is "Animeaux." Derrida plays with the language by omitting the suffix of plural "eaux" and forging the word "Animot." Moreover, the "mot" in Animot means a "word" in French. He particularly uses this word to illustrate how man comes after the animal, historically, only to have the power of language to control him.

[v] Capitalized 'Animal' refers to the category of 'Animot,' while lowercase 'animal' refers to non-human creatures.


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