

Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God*: Narrating the Dynamics of Dispossession

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According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'colonialism' comes from the Latin 'colonia' which means 'farm settlement,' and refers originally to the Romans who settled in foreign lands but still retained their citizenship. The first use of the term appeared in the eighteenth-century debates about the morality of slavery. In recent times different attempts have been made to define the term. Edward Said defines it as the "implanting of settlements on a distant territory" (9). For Ania Loomba, it refers to "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (2). Philip McMichael views it as "the subjugation by physical and psychological force of one culture by another—a colonizing power—through military conquest of territory" (5). For Enseng Ho, colonialism consists of "the occupation of territory by foreign settlers, soldiers or administrators" (225). Marxists view colonialism as a form of capitalism in the sense that it enforces exploitation. For Marx, it is an "instrument of wholesale destruction, DEPENDENCY and systematic exploitation producing distorted economies, socio-psychological disorientation, massive POVERTY and neocolonial dependency" (Johnston 94). In almost all the definitions cited above colonialism is connected with dominance, settlement and exploitation. It aims at creating, organizing and maintaining dominance over people of other countries. Such dominance is mainly for economic gains through exploitation. The industrial revolution created manufacturers and traders who started using better technology in search of cheap raw materials and open markets to sell their products. The relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, therefore, is a relationship of domination and dispossession. The colonizers, though their claim is bringing civilization, have voyaged only to pursue their own interests.

For many historians, there are two types of colonialism—exploitation colonialism and settler colonialism. Ronald J. Horvath in his article "A Definition of Colonialism" defines settler colonialism as "colonization in which the dominant relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is extermination of the latter" (47). Clarifying his point, he adds: "In the extreme sense of the word, to exterminate is to root out totally or eradicate" (ibid). The aim of settler colonialism is to eliminate indigenous people and take over their land. A typical example of this type is the colonization of Palestine by the Zionists.

This paper endeavours to study the various dynamics of dispossession and displacement that the Palestinians underwent in 1948, the year in which the State of Israel was established, as

portrayed in Ibrahim Fawal's novel *On the Hills of God*. As dispossession and displacement depicted in the novel can of course be seen as implicated in the colonial and political arrangements of the era, the usefulness of the study will not be complete without a glimpse of the colonial history of Palestine. This way the novel will be discussed in its proper context.

In fact, Zionist colonization of Palestine goes back to the late nineteenth century. It was Theodor Herzl who first thought of establishing a homeland for the European Jews. The idea was born as a result of Jewish persecution and dispersion since the Roman conquest of Palestine in the first century. This ideology was soon manifested in the formation of the First World Zionist Congress held in Basle in 1897. After the congress, Herzl wrote in his diary, "At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I were to say this today, I would be met by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it" (Patai, Vol. 2, 581). Of the location of the state, Herzl said, "Shall we choose Palestine or Argentine? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion" (28). Herzl then negotiated with the British regarding the possibility of settling the Jews on the island of Cyprus, the Sinai Peninsula, the El Arish region and Argentine. In May 1903, Joseph Chamberlain, the British minister of colonies, proposed Uganda as a place for a Jewish homeland. The suggestion was met with sharp opposition because many Jews trace their homeland back to biblical territories in Palestine and want to establish a state there.

However, this dream was fulfilled only after World War II. After the World War I, France and Britain moved from competition on the Arab world to cooperation. The Ottoman Empire, as a result of its defeat in the war, had virtually ceased to exist. The winners in the war started to redraw the political map of the Middle East in the manner which suited them best. In 1920, an agreement—Sykes-Picot Agreement—had been reached between Britain and France on how the former Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire would be divided between them. According to the agreement, France would have a direct control over Syria and Lebanon whereas the British were to have a free hand in Iraq and Palestine. This was a new beginning in the history of the region which became four separate states. All four new-born countries were artificial creations established and given their initial organization by foreign imperial powers.

The region of Palestine came under the control of the British as a mandate granted by the League of Nations. Immediately after the war, Britain issued 'Balfour Declaration' in which the British advocated the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Issuing of the statement was motivated by both sympathy for the Zionist cause and by British desire to rally Jews to the side of the Allies. However, the real motive was that the creation of

Israel would be the easiest way of securing lasting British influence of the region. Following Balfour declaration, waves of Zionist immigrants into Palestine began, though in small numbers. Hitler's rise to power, the holocaust combined with Zionist activities to sabotage efforts to place Jewish refugees in western countries, led to increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, and conflict grew. Eventually, fighting broke out; escalating waves of violence and counter-violence continued and still on the move till today. In 1947 the United Nations decided to intervene and declared its resolution to partition Palestine into two sovereign states, one Arab and one Jewish. The United Nations' partition resolution was followed by the declaration of the State of Israel in the territories assigned to them. They soon started their cleansing campaign to empty the land of its real inhabitants, the Arabs because this had been one of the major items on the agenda of their movement.

As mentioned above, Israel is a typical example of settler colonialism. What Zionist colonization has in common with settler-colonialism is the dispossession and elimination of the indigenous population of the colonized country, Arabs in this case. This has been well documented by the French historian Maxime Rodinson in his book *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (1973). Since its birth in the late 19th century, Zionism has within its philosophy the intention to transfer the inhabitants of the territory assigned for it out of its borders in order to fully realize its goal of establishing a nation home for the Jewish people. Herzl wrote in his diary that the natives of whatever land was allotted to the Jews would be gently persuaded to move to other countries. "We must expropriate gently the private property on the state assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our country" (Patai, Vol. 2, 88). What this statement shows is that the notion of transfer was very much a primary thought like Zionism itself. When the choice fell on Palestine, the leading figures of Zionism started implementing their plan of driving the Arabs. Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, stated that: "We must expel the Arabs and take their places" (qtd. in Masalha 143). Elsewhere he states, "In various parts of the country new Jewish settlement will not be possible unless there is a transfer of the Arab fellahin....The transfer of population is what makes possible a comprehensive settlement program" (qtd. in Morris 43). The disregard for the Arab population from leading Zionist figures gives insight into the mindset of political Zionism; it had concluded Palestine as the home for the Jewish state regardless of the inhabitants and was willing to drive out the Arab people in order to secure the complete possession of the land. This brings forth the idea that the transfer of Palestinian Arabs has been a hallmark in the foundations of political Zionism.

The statements made by the founders of Zionism coupled with the actions of the first Israeli government clearly explain the 1948 Arab exodus in which 750,000 Palestinians (two-thirds of population) were sent out of Palestine. To expel the Arabs, Jews have resort to the most violent methods. They committed massacres, demolished the houses, burned the orchards and bulldozed everything that stood on their way. They laid siege to and bombarded villages and population centres; set fire to homes, properties, and goods and, finally, planted mines in the ruins to prevent the expelled inhabitants from returning. Clashes with local Palestinian militias, especially after the partition resolution, provided a perfect context and pretext for implementing the ideological vision of an ethnically cleansed Palestine.

Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God* (1998) revisits all these events providing, in the process, a historical sense and identity for those who lived through them. The novel is set in an imaginary place called Ardallah standing for Palestine of the present and narrates the story of Palestinian exodus of 1948. In a powerful retrospective sequence, Fawal traces the processes leading up to the eventual displacement of Palestinians from their native town. The entire scenery is cast against the backdrop of a family's life during the year leading up to the massive expulsion of the Palestinians concomitant upon the creation of the Jewish State led to displacement of people. The novel revolves around Dr. Safi's family which consists of Dr. Jamil Safi, his wife, his son, Yousif and his wife Salwa and a cousin named Basim. In the beginning of the novel, the family is depicted as well-to-do with a homeland, two homes, stock, clinic, savings, jewelry, cash and a future but at the end of the story the family is scattered, its head and protector, Dr. Safi, is dead, Salwa is lost, Yousif and his mother are refugees in Jordan, their homeland is occupied, their property is taken and they have become refugees in another country with no hopeful future in sight. Safi's capacious, beautiful villa and its spacious garden in Ardallah are replaced by a tiny, dark and miserable room void even from water in diaspora. The novel ends with this single moment of transformation in which the lives of Palestinians is turned upside down and have never recovered since then.

The novel opens in the "last summer of happiness," (Fawal 1)—the last summer before the creation of Israeli state, the last summer before thousands of Palestinians lost their home and became refugees, the last summer before thousands of Palestinians lost the aroma of olives and oranges forever—June 1947, less than a year before *Al-Nakba* (Arabs refer to the exodus as *Al-Nakba* meaning the catastrophe). At the outset of the novel, the reader is introduced to a microcosmic world represented by a town called Ardallah. The fictional locale and the title of the book have almost a similar meaning 'the land of God.' "Ard" in Arabic means land and with "Allah," it means the land belonging to Allah. This alludes to the fact that humans are perishable and sooner or later they are to leave this world

leaving behind all property and glory they have spent their lives fighting for. The hills, according to Yousif, belong neither to Arabs nor Jews and both should behave like squatters. To make his point clear, he wonders: "Where is Alexander the Great? Where is Richard the Lion Heart? Where is Salah id-Din? Where are their conquests?...All gone to dust....Either history is useless or we are too dumb. We seem to be taking the same test over and over and over again—and never passing" (Fawal 227). The title is inspired by Jamal, the blind basket-weaver and musician, who before getting blind used to sit on the hills of Ardallah and attempt to "write a symphony of these hills—the hills of God" (Fawal 85). By sitting his novel in this fictional town, Fawal draws closer to the place-centred fiction of great postcolonial writers such as Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Chinua Achebe. Ardallah is reminiscent of Kanthapora, Malgudi and Kangan where the three writers respectively set their masterpieces.

Metaphorically, Ardallah stands for Palestine itself, since the Palestinian scenario—tensions and social and political metamorphosis—gets projected on the symbolic level of the characters' everyday interaction in this town. Ardallah also contains a typical mix of political views, from peace-loving physician Dr. Safi and his son to his fiery cousin Basim and other residents of the town. These differences of political conviction manifest themselves in differences about the need for arms for self-defense.

Pre-Israel Ardallah is portrayed as idyllic, peaceful and communal. People of all religions—Muslims, Christians and Jews—are living side by side. The children of the three faiths who are born on the same day are breastfed by the three mothers so that when they grow up they become brothers. This shows how harmonious life was before the emergence of Zionism. Actually, peace of the town is manifest in the presence of the tourists. In summer, Ardallah is regarded as one of the best resorts for many foreign and local people. Hundreds of tourists visit the town every year to enjoy its beauty and calmness.

What characterizes Ardallah in the period prior to the Zionist resettlement is its citizens' aspiration for the future. All people in this tranquil town are looking forward to the future. Yousif and his two friends, Amin and Isaac, are dreaming of joining college next year; Dr. Safi, having finished building his villa, is going to build a hospital in the town. His dream is to see Ardallah as a land of peace. What interests him is building things and making them grow. It is he who thought of developing the only real estate agency in the town. It is he who worked hard to make Ardallah a summer resort and invested the first cinema. Fawal has made his characters look forward to the future with the advent of colonialism only to show that a colonized society is "a society without future precisely because this is what the colonialism negates and grounds itself on" (Tsenay 247). In fact, the

life led by the citizens of Ardallah is unremarkable except for the ambivalent emotional attitudes towards the British as oppressors and colonizers though those attitudes remain submerged. The normalcy, which always shadows the calmness that precedes the storm, is embodied in the family's celebration after getting their villa constructed. The day on which the novel opens is the happiest day in the life of Safis because they are going to celebrate as their new villa is to get its roof. Ten years have passed since Dr. Safi started building the villa. As it is nearly finished, all relatives, friends, and major personalities in Ardallah have been invited to share this happy occasion with the family.

However, Safis' happiness does not last and their idealistic world is shattered the moment the United Nations declare its resolution of partitioning Palestine into two states. The scene takes place at al-Fardous Café where hundreds of Ardallah's residents have gathered to listen to the news announcing whether the United Nations will vote for or against partition. To Arabs' astonishment, the United Nations passed the resolution to partition Palestine. Those gathered are touched by the memory of the simple life that is about to be snatched away from them for reasons they cannot understand. They are stripped of all hopes, begin to realize that they are about to lose everything, and yet are powerless to do anything about this. Not unreasonably, the partition plan is unacceptable to the Arabs, a people in place for centuries with no appetite to approve of the transfer of their birthright to recent arrivals. Fawal, recording the reaction of the Arab people to the United Nation's Resolution, creates a realistic meta-history. It is unique the way this ironic building up of loss is dramatized in the novel, showing the utter helplessness of ordinary people overwhelmed by historical forces that are simply beyond their control, or even their comprehension.

Basim, immediately at the end of the news, stands atop a flight of stairs and starts addressing the gathering at the Café. His long speech sums up the intricacies of the situation and reflects a deep insight into the nature of the colonial conspiracy against not only Palestine but also the entire Arab region. Repeating the word 'today' throughout his speech, Basim lays emphasis on the present moment as a turning point in history at which a farewell has been bid for peace in the Middle East. What enraged Basim more is the UN's indifference towards Palestinians who have owned and inhabited Palestine for centuries. Through his speech one can immediately recognize his political understanding of the situation. He knows that such an endeavour taken by the UN will only enhance hatred and violence between the two peoples forever. Even if, Basim assures the people, the Zionists were given the best half; they will never be satisfied and will sooner or later ask for the second half. The Zionists do not want only Palestine. They want to build an empire stretching from the Euphrates in Iraq to the Nile in Egypt. Their strategy, as

Basim puts it, is “take what you can get and then ask for more. Today half of Palestine, tomorrow the second half and the day after tomorrow most of the Middle East” (Fawal 75). Basim’s reference to Zionists’ intention of occupying all of Middle East seems to anticipate David Ben-Gurion’s speech on January 13, 1949, when he said: “To a large extent, the creation of the state [of Israel] was an act of self-defense.... But now the issue at hand is conquest, not self-defense. As for setting the borders—it’s an open-ended matter. In the Bible, as well as in our history there are all kinds of definitions of the country’s borders, so there’s no real limit. No border is absolute” (Segev 6). This statement gives a clue to the real expansionist ideology hidden under the claims of return to the biblical homeland. So, the message that Basim wants to send to his fellow citizens of Ardallah becomes clear and loud. He seems to say: you Palestinians better carry arms and fight for your freedom because your enemy is brutal and will destroy you whether you fight against him or not. If death is the outcome of both cases, it is better to die fighting.

After the UN’s declaration, the Zionists begin their plan to clean Palestine from its people. They employed all types of atrocities and aggressions to force Arabs leave their homes. All those atrocities are encapsulated in the massacre of Deir Yasin, one of the most horrible crimes that can be compared to the holocaust itself. Fawal refers to it as “our Auschwitz” (Fawal 238). They started sending Arabs who were living in the territories assigned for them. Hundred of Palestinians evacuated their homes under the force of the gun. Those who refused were slaughtered in cold blood. In Deir Yasin alone over 254 inhabitants including women and children were slaughtered in one night; some of them were thrown into a well, others were doused with kerosene and set alight. There were also cases of mutilation, rape and amputation. “Virgins were raped in the presence of their fathers....Pregnant women were slit open and embryos were scattered on the floor....Baby’s heads were crushed like chestnuts. Eyes were knocked out and left hanging like large marbles....Children were dissected and their young flesh mercilessly scraped off their tender bones” (Fawal 233). In the same page Fawal adds, “Hitler’s victims have turned into victimizers. At their hand Deir Yasin has become a crematory, a cemetery, and a blot on the Jewish conscience forever” (Fawal 233). Seeing the massacre, Yousif wonders, “Was this the Wandering Jew’s way of returning to the Promised Land? Was this the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy? How inhumane! How immoral!” (Fawal 236). Such a massacre shows one thing: the Jews are ready to use any means that will clear the Arabs from their way though it may put them in the same level as the Nazis. By Dier Yasin massacre, the Jews wanted to instill fear and horror in the hearts of the natives. The result was as they expected. The massacre promoted terror and dread in the surrounding Arab villages whose inhabitants abandoned their homes immediately. A legend of terror spread

amongst Arabs who were seized with panic at the mention of Israeli soldiers.

Gradually, cities, towns and villages were destroyed and their inhabitants expelled. Villages fell in quick succession. Hundreds of thousands were driven out of their homes by the victorious Jewish brigades. Refugees from Haifa, Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh and Jerusalem started pouring to Ardallah like a raging flood. They were carrying bundles of clothes on their heads. They reported their dilemma to the citizens of Ardallah. With guns behind their backs and over their heads, they have been forced to leave their homes to make room for the Zionists. The strategy was one of massive surprise attack against the civilian populations, softened by continuous mortar and rocket bombardment. Such people were not able to stand the Zionists' monstrosity and had no other choice but to leave for their lives.

The newcomers' reports of the Zionist atrocities frightened Ardallah's citizens who have been living in fear since partition. After Deir Yasin, Ardallah, like any other place in Palestine, becomes a location of a potential massacre in which victims are helplessly trapped. Basim realizes that Palestine is slipping from Arabs' hands who are responding with worry and anger. The atrocities and violence that the Zionists launched convinces him that violence has to be encountered by violence. So, he declares it the duty of every Arab living in Ardallah to take share to hold them off at least till Arab armies—whom he does not have any faith in—arrive. He and other notables in Ardallah start collecting money to buy arms to defend their land. The people gather around Basim who becomes a local version of a legend. The simplicity of Ardallah's citizens is seen when Basim comes back with tens of old guns. They thought that with less than hundred guns they could fight the Zionists and defend their country. "Suddenly," writes Fawal, "nobody was afraid. Everybody seemed gripped with a sense of mission: to save Ardallah. Another Deir Yasin it would never be" (Fawal 271). This statement is very suggestive in the sense that Arabs' resort to violence is reactive. It is their fear of being eliminated that stirred in them such an action. Even the animal at the moment of facing death becomes brutal. The mission, then, of carrying arms is a sacred mission of preserving life against extermination.

Dr. Safi tries to convince Basim that armed struggle is of no use in this situation: "Believe me...peace is won by peace and nothing else. So forgive me if I don't get excited over your plans" (Fawal 141). He refuses to give him the hospital money to buy arms. His refusal stems not only from his believe that buying a small allotment of guns will be useless against Israelis, but also because he does not want to contribute to what he perceives as perpetual warfare in Palestine. He explains to Yousif, "as much as I love this country, it's nothing but a big cemetery. More wars have been fought here more than any other

place in the world. From time immemorial, here more than anywhere else, man has been at his brother's throat" (Fawal 249). Here Dr. Safi sounds like Rosse in *Macbeth* lamenting the Scottish homeland during the tyranny of the usurper king "poor country/Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot/Be called our mother, but our grave" (212). Dr. Safi knows that war brings only "death and destruction" (Fawal 116) for both and, therefore, "both sides are foolish. The winner will be a loser" (Fawal 250). Furthermore, he does not give the money only to "spare them [Arabs] some foolishness," (Fawal 269) because he knows that the Zionists sooner or later will get their state: "The West seems set on paying old debts to the Jews. Nothing we could've done would've mattered" (Fawal 83). "It will be a miracle," therefore, "if they don't get their state" (Fawal 84). He knows, as ustaz Saadeh says, that this "piece of theater has been written over the last half century. Who gets what is preordained on paper. Now they must put it on the ground. No matter what it takes" (Fawal 378). He knows that important "matters are being discussed behind the scenes—in chambers and corridors and across polished mahogany tables. The real battles have been fought and won in foreign capitals" (Fawal 379). Hence, whatever they do will bear no fruit at all. However, this is not surrender but rather a deep understanding of the situation. He understands that Palestine is not in a position to fight the powers backing Israel and it is therefore better to seek a compromise through nonviolent means. In other words, Safi's embrace of the nonviolent tactics of Mahatma Gandhi and King does not mean that he fully embraces their spiritually-based philosophies of nonviolence. Rather, he knows that for this struggle to give rise to physical liberation, it was necessary that it exists within the political and military realities of the Israeli invasion in which the armed power of the colonizers outmatched that of the Palestinian one. Therefore, Safi's nonviolence may be seen more as a tactic than a personal conviction.

However Basim goes on his belief. He knows that guns alone cannot fight and, hence, starts recruiting the people of Ardallah. He sets up a recruiting station to train people the military tactics. After recruiting, Basim distributes the men on the seven hills surrounding Ardallah. He also gets Amin's father, the stonecutter and the builder, to build barricades on every entrance to the town and a watchtower on every hill. People of all castes, ranks and classes—school teachers, postmen, farmers, engineers, garbage collectors and so on—participated in guarding Ardallah. They felt proud of their devotion to the motherland and were convinced that they could make a difference by following the path of violence. Their patriotism and passionate devotion to their cause find eloquent expression in the famous poem: "We, young men, will never get tired/Our concern is to be either independent or annihilated/We would rather drink death/Than be slaves to our enemy" (Fawal 197). This authenticates Fanon's theory that violence binds the community together, and commits each individual in the eyes of both himself and others. Such solidarity can

be understood as a possible effect of being surrounded by violence. Arendt fittingly describes this phenomenon as an emerging “brotherhood on the battlefield,” (Arendt 67) referring, undoubtedly, to Fanon’s statement “the practice of violence binds them [the colonized] together” (Fanon 93).

The irony of Dr Safi is that while he is against violence, he is killed by a violent attack. Gradually, the Zionists start sending their troops to invade Ardallah. One night during an attack on Ardallah, Basim is injured on the hill. Dr. Safi goes to attend him but the Zionists throw a bomb and he is killed. The death of Dr. Safi, as Robin Ostle says, is “a powerful symbol of the death of the future of Palestine, a future that was full of promise grounded in vision, humanity, and the common cause of Muslim, Christian, and Jew” (7). Only after his death do people realize what Safi stood for during his life. During his funeral one man says: “It’s a reminder of the fallen state of mankind and that this man of spirit, this beautiful soul, should have been considered too idealistic, too abstract for us ordinary people. Why isn’t the world a fit place for such a good man? Because the world was capable of massacres like Deir Yasin” (Fawal 302). Another man says:

The massacre of Deir Yasin gave rise to a cry that nearly tore him apart. His faith in the goodness of man was, to be sure, strained, shaken, shattered. But, it is a measure of his ultimate faith in humanity—that he did not succumb to utter despair. Till the very end he refused to believe that the grace of God would allow man to annihilate himself, but rather would lift him from the lower depths and would help him triumph and endure. Therefore, we must conclude that our departed brother, Dr. Jamil Safi, did not die a defeated man. (Fawal 302)

This declaration is reminiscent of Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* as he famously declares “A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Hemingway 78). Dr. Safi is physically killed but spiritually not. He may have lost the outer, material success in freeing his motherland but he has gained an inner spiritual success by freeing himself from the world of sin and murder.

Finally, Ardallah is invaded. One day in the early morning, Yousif hears loud explosions coming from the hill where Basim is guarding the town. He also hears cries and screams outside in the street. The moment he looks out from the window, he is astonished by the scene. Thousands of people are marching in the street driven by the Zionist soldiers. Four soldiers enter Safi’s house and order its inhabitants to evict it. One of the soldiers rapes Hiyam, one of the refugees who came from Lydda and was accommodated with her husband at Safis’ home, in front of her husband and the family members. This incident leaves a deep scar in Yousif’s mind but he is

helpless to do anything with guns pointed to his back. Hiyam's rape is a symbol of Palestine being victimized by invaders. The family requests the soldiers to allow them to take some clothes but they are not allowed. Yousif and his family go out to the street where thousands are already there with their night clothes and the journey to the unknown starts. At the outskirts of the town, the Zionists install checkpoints to search the people. They take everything they have—money, gold, silver, rings, earrings etc. in this context, Robin Ostle writes: "The culmination of the book is rape, pillage, the slaughter of innocents, and forced migrations—all the usual and predictable consequences of the exercise of brute force in the place of compassion, reason, and compromise" (7).

The heartbreaking episode of the whole novel is Fawal's description of the exodus. Ardallah's inhabitants and the refugees already there form an exodus unparalleled in the history of humanity. History repeats itself but with roles exchanged—Zionists now are the oppressors driving Arabs out of Palestine. Thousands of people—men, women, and children—walked up and down the mountains wandering to the unknown. Tens of them fall dead on the way and have to be left without burial for wild animals. It is this transformation that the reader of the novel undergoes. The reader immediately feels the agony, pain and suffering of the thousands of people walking on the mountains "like a human carpet" (Fawal 421). While on the mountains, the Zionist jets soar in the air bombing to their right and left assuring them that they are being followed and have to move on. Echoing Fawal, Shaw J. Dallal in his novel *Scattered Like Seeds* (1998), quotes George Habash, the founder and former leader of the leftist Palestinian resistance organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), as he describes the exodus:

Then it was [1948]...I don't know how to explain this...what this still means for us, not to have a home, not to have a nation, or anyone who cares...[The Israelis] forced us to flee. It is a picture that haunts me and that I'll never be able to forget. Thirty thousand human beings walking, weeping...screaming in terror, ...women with babies in their arms and children tugging at their skirts...and the Israeli soldiers pushing them on with their guns. Some people fell by the wayside, some never got up again. It was terrible. One thinks: this isn't life, this isn't human. Once you have seen this, your heart and your brain are transformed. (277)

During this journey towards Transjordan, Salwa's father dies on the way and is left unburied in the wilderness. The scarcity of water and the heat in the desert people are forced to urinate and drink. With more than 750,000 people moving, people lose their children, fathers, wives, beloveds and relatives. What more tragic her is the loss of Salwa.

At Jericho, the refugees are met by the Jordanian vehicles which will transfer them to Transjordan from where they will disperse all over the world till today. But for a displaced person, even the paradise can never be homely. Carrying his memories like a burden on his back, Yousif, with other Palestinians, is uprooted and cast into a wandering and insecure conditions. When he reaches Transjordan, he describes the landscape as uninviting: “Long stretches of flat hot desert lay on both sides of the highway” (Fawal 437). In Amman:

the city...looked bleak and arid—like a large village spread out at random. Dust blew everywhere. The streets were narrow and mostly unpaved. Ugly white stone houses and mud-brick huts were strewn haphazardly on several hills. There were no curves to please the eye, no trees or flowers to enliven the drab scene or break the monotony. (Fawal 437-8)

This contrasts starkly with Yousif’s fresh memories of Palestine: “Gone was Palestine with its oranges and olives and balmy weather. Gone were the golden summer nights in Ardallah. Gone were the richy green thickets and leafy orchards of Jericho. Gone were the smells of mango and guava and the bitter taste of endive salad” (Fawal 437). The implications of the passage are apparent: no land will act as a plausible substitute for Palestine. At the end of a long treacherous journey on foot and despite the monumental odds that are against him, Yousif, now a refugee, vows: “The conscience of the world must be pricked, awakened. And we will do it. This is not an idle promise....We shall return....I promise you this for the sake of all of us who have been dispossessed—the...babies who journeyed and died from thirst, the dead we left along the trail....We shall be delivered. We shall return” (Fawal 445-6). This is a very poignant passage, and one gets the feeling that like Yousif, the author feels the same.

The novel ends with Yousif and his mother accepting the first refuge they find in Amman—a bare room without money, without a source of livelihood, facing a future of exile. Fawal here demonstrates how the entire family, and with them all Palestinians, turns into refugees. He shows the sadness of leaving the homeland and the hardship of finding a place to stay. The novel ends leaving the family devastated with the reality of becoming refugees. The reader learns a lot about the family and their feelings and experiences vicariously the dramatic change inflicted upon them. The family, as mentioned earlier, starts as a well-to-do with a homeland, homes, money and future but ends ‘scattered like seeds,’ its head and protector is dead, Salwa is lost, their homeland is occupied, their property is taken and they have become refugees in another country with no hopeful future in sight. It is this transforming critical moment in the history of Palestinians that Fawal highlights throughout the novel. Fawal skillfully depicts the transformation of hundreds of thousands of

Palestinians who became refugees in 1948. So, the novel ends with this single moment of transformation in which the lives of Palestinians are turned upside down and have never recovered since then.

The novel, thus, invalidates the claim that Arabs left their villages because Arab leaders ordered them to do so. The Zionists, using all types of media, have propagated that they did not compel Arabs to leave their homes and, instead, it was the Arab rulers who called them to free the way for them to attack the Zionists. Fawal, revealing the real reason for Palestinian expulsion shows how the great majority of the Palestinians fled or were driven out from their homes under the force of guns and tanks. Hundreds of Arab villages were depopulated and destroyed, and their houses blown up or bulldozed. The novel demonstrates that the Zionist violence—operating on many fronts: massacring, annihilating, mutilating, raping etc.—is the major force that drove Palestinians. To conclude, Fawal's novel stands against the hegemonic discourse of Zionism in its timelessness, securing the survival of the Palestinian memory. The novel, with its documentation of the Palestinian displacement, dispossession and exile, forms a unique masterpiece that stands in defiance to the totalizing discourse of Zionism. Taking into consideration the Zionist claim of reinstating the Jews back into history, Fawal's novel, in its struggle against the Zionist discourse, then, constitutes the re-entry of the Palestinians into history, rather to the narrative, by virtue of filling the void of information in the dominant historical record.

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