

Palestinian Bedouins in Jamil as-Salhut's Novel *al-Mā'iq*: A Foucauldian Study of Power Relations

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ABSTRACT

This study examines power relations over the body and mind in Jamil as-Salhut's novel *al-Mā'iq*, highlighting their importance in understanding mechanisms of discipline and control. It aims to explain how power operates through everyday practices in Palestinian Bedouin society by using Michel Foucault's theory of power relations. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with the novel as the primary source of data. The findings show that power in the novel does not operate only through direct authority but also through cultural norms, religious values, political interests, and traditions that regulate both the body and the mind. These forms of power discipline women and men in different ways while encouraging them to internalize social expectations and accepted values. As a result, power becomes part of everyday life, shaping individual behavior, identity, and social relations rather than functioning merely as coercion. This finding supports Foucault's view that power is embedded in daily social practices and demonstrates how literary texts can reveal the subtle ways in which discipline and normalization operate within a traditional community. This study contributes to Foucauldian literary scholarship by showing how power relations are represented in the cultural setting of a Palestinian Bedouin community, a context that has received limited attention in previous studies. It also highlights the importance of literature as a medium for understanding the relationship between power, culture, and identity in Middle Eastern societies.

Keywords: Bedouins, Michel Foucault, Novel, Palestine, Power Relations

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل علاقات السلطة على الجسد والعقل في رواية المائق لجميل السلحوت، وبيان أهميتها في فهم آليات الضبط والسيطرة في المجتمع البدوي الفلسطيني، من خلال توظيف نظرية علاقات السلطة عند ميشيل فوكو. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الكيفي، واتخذت الرواية مصدرًا رئيسًا للبيانات، مع تحليل النصوص في ضوء نظرية فوكو. وأظهرت النتائج أن السلطة في الرواية لا تمارس من خلال السلطة المباشرة فحسب، بل تعمل أيضًا عبر الأعراف الثقافية، والقيم الدينية، والمصالح السياسية، والتقاليد الاجتماعية التي تنظم الجسد والعقل معًا، حيث تخضع النساء والرجال لآليات الضبط بطرائق مختلفة، بما يؤدي إلى استبطان التوقعات الاجتماعية والقيم السائدة. ونتيجة لذلك، تصبح السلطة جزءًا من الحياة اليومية، فتسهم في تشكيل السلوك الفردي، والهوية، والعلاقات الاجتماعية، بدلًا من أن تقتصر على الإكراه، وهو ما يؤيد رؤية فوكو القائلة إن السلطة متجذرة في الممارسات الاجتماعية اليومية، كما يبرز قدرة النص الأدبي على الكشف عن الكيفية التي تعمل بها آليات الانضباط والتطبيع داخل المجتمع التقليدي. وتتمثل أصالة هذا البحث في إسهامه في الدراسات الأدبية الفوكوية من خلال الكشف عن تمثيل علاقات السلطة في السياق الثقافي للمجتمع البدوي

الفلسطيني، وهو سياق لم يحظ باهتمام كافٍ في الدراسات السابقة، كما يؤكد أهمية الأدب بوصفه وسيطاً لفهم العلاقة بين السلطة والثقافة والهوية في مجتمعات الشرق الأوسط.
الكلمات المفتاحية: البدو، الرواية، فلسطين، ميشيل فوكو، علاقات السلطة

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INTRODUCTION

The Bedouin are an indigenous ethnic group in the Middle East, long known for their nomadic lifestyle shaped by the search for water and pastures (Almazidi, 2025). This way of life has produced a distinct cultural identity resistant to modernization in urban Arab societies (John et al., 2015). Their governance is rooted in clan structures that strengthen solidarity (Bailey, 2018), while power in this community emerges not only formally through tribal leaders but also through rituals, customs, and social control deeply embedded in everyday life. In Palestine, this communal order intersects with broader political and religious dynamics, making Bedouin life a rich field for examining how traditional power structures persist amid contemporary challenges.

Several studies have documented the realities of Palestinian Bedouin life, showing that issues of power and control are deeply embedded in their daily existence. Tatour (2019) analyzed how state regulations in the Naqab restrict mobility and undermine indigenous land rights, producing both physical and psychological vulnerability. In March (United Nations Development Programme/PAPP, 2017), United Nations Development Programme - Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) reported that Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank face home demolitions, forced displacement, and limited access to basic services, which directly impact their social and cultural resilience. (Samman, Mitwassi, & Kaloti, 2024) studied the Al-Kurshan Bedouins in Bethlehem District, emphasizing how patriarchal traditions continue to regulate marriage, reproduction, and inheritance, thereby shaping identity and social roles. Elsana (2018) further highlighted how systematic dispossession of land erodes not only physical survival but also the cultural memory of Bedouin communities. Together, these studies confirm that questions of power over the body and mind are not abstract but part of the lived reality of Palestinian Bedouins.

While earlier studies have examined Bedouin society mainly through the lenses of state domination, land dispossession, or cultural identity, they have paid less attention

to how power is produced and sustained through everyday cultural practices within the community itself. As a result, the role of clan traditions, religious norms, and patriarchal practices in regulating both the body and the mind remains insufficiently explored. Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq* portrays these mechanisms of power, offering insights that complement existing ethnographic and sociopolitical accounts. Reading the novel through Michel Foucault's concept of power relations allows for a deeper understanding of how everyday practices regulate behavior and thought in ways that are less visible but equally pervasive. Rather than simply applying a Foucauldian framework to another literary text, this study demonstrates how the novel illustrates disciplinary power operating through kinship structures, tradition, and religion as interconnected mechanisms that shape both bodily practices and mental subjectivity within Palestinian Bedouin society. In this way, the study contributes to Foucauldian literary scholarship by extending discussions of how power functions within traditional cultural communities.

This study is directed by a main research question: how are power relations over the body and mind represented in Jamīl as-Salhūt's novel *al-Mā'iq*? The purpose of this research is to examine how cultural norms, religious values, and clan traditions regulate both body and mind in the daily lives of Palestinian Bedouins as depicted in the text. Through this focus, the study seeks to highlight the role of literature as a medium that not only mirrors social realities but also reveals the often-hidden ways in which power operates within a community.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to identify the forms of power relations over the body and mind represented in Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq*. Second, it seeks to analyze how these mechanisms of power operate through cultural norms, religious values, and clan-based traditions within Palestinian Bedouin society. Third, it intends to interpret the broader cultural and social implications of such mechanisms, thereby demonstrating the ways in which literature functions as a space of domination.

This study argues that in Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq*, power is shown through the control of both men and women in the Bedouin community. Power over the body appears in how women are valued for their reproductive role and how men are disciplined to meet strict standards of masculinity. Power over the mind is seen in the influence of religion, traditions, and social rules that guide how individuals, both male and female, think, act,

and understand their place in society. The novel shows that power does not only come from leaders or formal institutions, but also works in everyday life through cultural and social practices that regulate the behavior and thinking of all community members.

Many studies have examined Palestinian society and literature from different perspectives, such as identity, culture, and power. These studies can generally be grouped into three main areas, research on Bedouin communities, research on gender in Arab societies, and research that uses Michel Foucault's theory of power relations to analyze social or literary texts. Mapping these areas helps to see what has been done and what still needs more attention, which is where the present study takes its place.

Research on Bedouin communities often highlights the ways in which they negotiate their place between tradition and modern state structures. Tatour (Tatour, 2019) documents how Bedouin groups face systematic restrictions on mobility and land ownership, which threaten both their physical survival and cultural continuity. Marinaki (2021), through 22 months of ethnographic work in Wadi Rum, shows that Bedouin identity and masculinity are shaped through complex relations with the state, where cultural practices such as camel racing or tourism serve both as expressions of heritage and as instruments of control. More recently, (Abu Hamdan & Mason, 2025) argue that while the state frequently denies the indigenous status of Bedouins, it simultaneously uses their culture as a symbol of national heritage, creating tensions over recognition, citizenship, and rights. These studies demonstrate that Bedouin life is not isolated from wider systems of power but is deeply influenced by political, cultural, and social pressures.

The second strand of research concerns gender relations and the regulation of bodies in Arab societies. Many studies show that women are often placed within patriarchal systems that limit their roles to reproduction, marriage, and domestic duties, while men are expected to conform to strict ideals of masculinity. Baburajan (2020) highlights how Arab societies construct "gendered spaces," where women are often confined to the private sphere while men dominate the public domain. More recently, Samman, Mitwassi, and Kaloti (Samman et al., 2024) found that patriarchal traditions among Bedouin families in Bethlehem continue to govern marriage practices, inheritance rules, and the social value of women's reproductive roles. Together, these studies illustrate how cultural and social norms discipline both women and men, making gender

a central site where power relations are enacted.

The third strand of research applies to Michel Foucault's theory of power relations to social and literary texts. Syah and Aminaha (2022) examined the novel *Hukumatu Dzil* and found that religion and culture serve as symbolic mechanisms of control over both body and mind. Asih (2023) analyzed the Egyptian novel *Syīkājū*, showing how government domination spreads through institutions, regulations, and religious discourse. In a postcolonial setting, Mavengano (2025) combined Foucault's ideas with Doreen Massey's spatial theory to examine *The Wanderers*, where racialized and spatialized bodies illustrate conditions of vulnerability and alienation. These studies demonstrate that Foucauldian analysis remains a productive approach for uncovering how power operates in both visible and subtle ways across different cultural and literary contexts.

Literature becomes an important medium for portraying these dynamics, since literary works are not merely products of imagination but reconstructions of social realities that reflect how communities negotiate authority and identity (Halil, 2016; Damono, 2022). In this context, Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq* offers a vivid depiction of Palestinian Bedouin life, where the body and mind of individuals are bound by collective norms yet also function as sites of negotiation. According to Ma'an News (2024), this novel has been recommended as a reference in educational units across Arab countries because of its rich social issues and meaningful messages. This makes *al-Mā'iq* a valuable lens for understanding the cultural background of power relations in traditional societies.

Even though many studies have discussed Bedouin society, gender, and the use of Foucault in literature, there is still little research that looks at Palestinian Bedouins in novels from the perspective of power over body and mind. Most gender studies only focus on women, while Foucauldian studies usually talk about Arab or postcolonial contexts in general, not about Bedouin life. Because of this, we still do not know enough about how both men and women in Palestinian Bedouin society are controlled by customs, religion, and traditions when these are shown in literary works.

This study fills that gap by examining Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq* using Michel Foucault's concept of power relations, with a particular focus on power over the body and the mind. The novel demonstrates how customs, religion, and clan traditions shape both the body and the mind of Bedouin men and women through everyday social practices. By reading the text in this way, this study shows that literature is not only a reflection of

culture but also a means of revealing how disciplinary power is produced, internalized, and reproduced within traditional communities. Rather than simply applying a Foucauldian framework to a new literary object, this study highlights how the interaction of kinship structures, religious norms, and customary traditions provides a deeper understanding of how power operates simultaneously over bodily practices and subjectivity in Palestinian Bedouin society. In this regard, it contributes to Foucauldian literary scholarship and enriches discussions of power, culture, and identity in Middle Eastern literary studies.

METHODS

The unit of analysis in this research is Jamīl as-Salhūt's novel *al-Mā'iq*, with a focus on examining the forms of power relations over the body and mind as reflected in the lives of Palestinian Bedouin characters. This focus is significant because the novel portrays how cultural, religious, and social norms discipline individual behavior and shape collective identity within a traditional society.

This study adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive analytical approach to reveal the workings of power in literary texts. This design is chosen because it enables the researcher to uncover social meanings and discourses of power that cannot be measured statistically but emerge through narrative structures and symbolic representations (Nasution, 2023). Furthermore, qualitative research allows an exploration of literary works in their complexity, such as identity, ideology, aesthetic richness, and affective elements thereby providing a comprehensive interpretation of literature while enriching academic discourse (Wajiran, 2024).

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. The primary source is the novel *al-Mā'iq*, while the secondary sources include Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, particularly his concepts of power over the body and mind, along with supporting books, journal articles, and relevant previous studies. In this framework, power is understood not as domination centered on institutions or individuals but as dispersed across discourse, bodies, and minds (Christensen, 2024; Nwadinihu, 2025). Power operates subtly through discipline, normalization, and everyday practices, making individuals simultaneously objects and agents of power (Kebung, 2017). Foucault distinguishes between power over the body, which regulates

behavior through cultural norms (Jones, Bradbury, & Boutillier, 2016), and power over the mind, which works through social systems such as folklore, religion, and discourse to establish control (Torres-Cuello & Pinzon-Salcedo, 2023). These concepts serve as the analytical lens for interpreting how the novel reflects mechanisms of domination and resistance.

The data collection technique employed is a literature study. The process began with intensive and repeated readings of the novel to identify characters, events, and narrative elements that illustrate the practice of power and resistance. Relevant passages from the novel were then extracted as research data. In addition, supporting literature was reviewed, including theoretical works, academic articles, and previous research, to provide contextual depth and strengthen the analysis.

The stages of data analysis followed a descriptive-interpretative model. First, textual data were categorized based on themes related to bodily and mental power. Second, these findings were described systematically to reveal how power manifests in the novel. Third, interpretation was conducted using Foucauldian concepts of power to explain how customs, religion, and social norms function as mechanisms of control within the Bedouin community. This technique allows the study to move beyond description toward interpretation of the broader cultural significance of power relations, thereby showing how literary texts reflect and critique the social realities they represent (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter on results and discussion, two forms of power were found in the novel *al-Mā'iq*, namely power over the body and mind of the Palestinian Bedouin community. The following is a detailed analysis of both.

Power over the Body in the Novel *al-Mā'iq*

In Michel Foucault's perspective, the body is not merely a biological entity, but also an arena that power works intensively through various social and cultural mechanisms. The body becomes an object that is disciplined, regulated, and exploited for the interests of a broader power system. Power over the body in this novel is classified into four forms of domination, namely based on gender, politics, religion, and culture (Fadhilah, 2025). Each category is analyzed descriptively and analytically based on the

narrative and quotations found in the novel.

Power over the body based on gender

In the context of gender, the bodies of Bedouin women are constructed as objects of desire, control, and identity determined by society. One example is the advice given by Şafiyyah's mother to her daughter, who has just given birth to the future successor of the Bedouin tribe leader.

البشارة يا شيخ، أنجبت صفيّة ولدًا ذكرًا، وجهه يُشعُّ نورا كالقمر البدر، ما شاء الله نسخةً طبق الأصل عنك.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Al-bisyāratu yā Syaikhū, anjabat Şafiyyatu waladan ḡakaran, wajhuhū yusyī ‘u nūran ka al-qamari al-badri, mā syā`a Allāhu nuskhatun ṭibqī al-aşli ‘anka/

‘Good news, Sheikh! Şafiyya has given birth to a son. His face shines like the full moon, Masha'Allah, he is an exact copy of you.’

This passage explicitly shows that the female body represented by the character Safiyya becomes an arena for gender power to operate. The overflowing joy, month-long celebrations, and large-scale animal slaughter only occur because of the birth of a male child. The dominant masculine social norm dictates that the peak value of a woman's reproductive function is to give birth to a male heir. Safiyya's body is considered successful and valuable because it meets social expectations. In this case, women's bodies are produced as objects that are valued based on their reproductive capacity to give birth to sons. If Safiyya had given birth to a daughter, it is conceivable that the level of celebration and joy would not have been as great, and there might even have been disappointment. This indirectly shows that women's bodies that give birth to daughters are considered inferior or failures in meeting prevailing social norms.

Not only women, but men are also controlled by their bodies. The reason is that the context of gender is seen from the value of an individual, which is also determined by their ability to meet the prevailing standards of masculinity. The character Mājid, the son of Sheikh Mas‘ūd, has a physical condition and mental capacity that are subject to strict supervision.

الشيخ مسعود: ماجد عقله أصغر من عمره .

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Asy-Syaikhu Mas'ūdu: 'Mājidu aqluhū ašgaru min 'umrihi'./

'Sheikh Mas'ud: 'Mājid's mind is smaller than his age (dull-witted).'

The statement by Sheikh Mas'ūd, a Palestinian Bedouin tribal chief, directly describes the body and mental capacity of men who are objects of power through normalization. There is an observed deficiency in Mājid because he threatens the continuity of the patriarchal genealogy. Mājid's failure is his inability to function normally according to the standards expected of a sheikh's heir. In another quote from the novel, this inability manifests itself in his inability to crawl at the appropriate time, his fear of approaching horses, and his reluctance to socialize in gatherings (as-Salhūt, 2024). He is considered a failure in meeting the norms. Mājid's condition becomes a sign that is monitored by Sheikh Mas'ūd and triggers concerns that lead to the threat of polygamy against Şafiyya, Mājid's mother. This shows that Mājid's body is not socially and biologically productive according to the norms, so he cannot become the expected pillar of the clan.

Although Mājid was a boy and the heir to the sheikh, his disability or abnormality made him a subject who had to be controlled, removed, or reconfigured so as not to tarnish the clan's honor. Male bodies are also monitored and judged based on strict performance standards in gender discourse. Thus, a form of disciplinary power emerges that shapes the ideal man and eliminates those who deviate.

Power over gender reached its peak in Sheikh Mas'ūd's expulsion of Mājid because he could no longer tolerate his son's behavior. The following is an excerpt from Sheikh Mas'ūd's conversation with Mājid's mother.

أقسمتُ ألا يبقى في ديرتي، لينصرف، فبلادُ الله واسعةٌ، جهّزي له ما ترينه من طعامٍ وشرابٍ
وملابس، وأعطيه خمسَ ليرات، و"طريق تأخذ ما ترد"، وحملّيه على حمارٍ، وقالَ لماجد: انتحل
اسمًا آخرَ، ولا تقلْ لأيِّ إنسانٍ عن اسمِ أبيك أو اسمِ عشيرتك.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Aqsamtu allā yabqā fī dairatī, liyanṣarifā, fa bilaādu Allāhi wāsi'atun, jahhizī
lahū mā tarainahū min ṭa'āmin wa syarābin wa malābis, wa aṭihī khamṣa līrātīn,
wa "ṭarīqun ta'ḥuẓu mā taruddu", wa ḥammilīhī 'alā ḥimārin, wa qāla li Mājida:
Intaḥil isman ākhara, wa lā taqul li ayyi insānin 'an ismi abīka aw ismi
'asyīratika./

‘I swear Mājīd will not stay in my territory, let him go. Allah's land is vast. Prepare for him food, drink, and clothing as deemed necessary. Give him five liras, show him 'a foreign road so he does not return', and take him away on a donkey. Then he said to Mājīd: ‘Use another name and do not tell anyone about your father's name or your clan's name.’

Sheikh Mas‘ūd's order to expel his son, Mājīd, from the clan's territory was a form of punishment based on gender power. The punishment took the form of erasing identity and separating the failed body from the idealized normal and masculine social body. Mājīd's inability to fulfill the norms of masculinity, both physically and mentally, made him a threat to the honor and legitimacy of the clan's power. Therefore, those in power took repressive measures to eliminate this deviant body, while maintaining the purity of the dominant gender discourse in society. The body of Ṣafīyya, Mājīd's mother, was also forced to carry out this order, making her an agent of symbolic violence directed at her son (as-Salhūt, 2024). Thus, power can manipulate agents within it to achieve its desired goals.

Power over the body based on politics

Political power in the domestic sphere exercised by patriarchal figures, such as mothers and husbands, shows that bodies are controlled and shaped to maintain household stability. One of the clearest examples of power over the body in domestic politics is through the practice of power that regulates women's reproductive functions (Franks, 2022). Ṣafīyya' mother, Zubaidah, explicitly gave instructions and norms that Ṣafīyya must obey to maintain her status and marriage. This was evident when Zubaidah gave advice to Ṣafīyya after she gave birth to her first son, Mājīd:

تجهّزي لِتَحْمِلِي وَلِتَلْدِي كُلَّ عَامٍ طِفْلاً أَوْ تَوَامِين، كُونِي لِلشَّيْخِ مَسْعُودَ فَرَاشاً؛ لِيَكُونَ لَكَ غَطَاءٌ.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Tajahhazzī li taḥmilī wa li talidī kulla āmin ṭiflan aw tahu`amaini, kūnī li asy-syaiḥhi Mas`ūdu firāsyān; li yakūna laki ḡiṭā`an./

‘Be prepared to conceive and give birth every year to a child or twins. As you know, ‘children are pegs’. The sheikhs love entertainment, so be a bed for Sheikh Masoud; so that he becomes a blanket for you.’

Ṣafīyya's body was disciplined to reproduce continuously, not for her own desires, but to fulfill the Sheikh's need for many descendants as a symbol of the clan's strength

and authority. Furthermore, Zubaidah instructed Ṣafiyya to manage her appearance so that she would always be attractive to her husband as a strategy to prevent the Sheikh from taking another wife (as-Salhūt, 2024). This behavior is a form of internalized surveillance because women are taught to monitor and manage their own bodies according to patriarchal desires and norms. A woman's body is no longer her own, but rather an object that must be regulated and beautified for the sake of men and family stability within the existing power system.

Control practices in domestic politics are also reinforced by threats and the normalization of polygamy. Ṣafiyya, like other women in Bedouin society, must face the reality that "women are more numerous than the sadness in the heart" (as-Salhūt, 2024). This expression demeans women and implies that they are easily replaceable. The threat of polygamy is used as a tool to subdue Ṣafiyya if she shows disobedience.

Furthermore, in order to maintain stability and compensate for the failure to produce an heir, Ṣafiyya must accept the reality of being married to another woman. The following is a quote from the novel.

تَجْهَزي لِتَحْمِلِي وَلِتَلْدِي كُلَّ عَامٍ طِفْلاً أَوْ تَوَامِينَ، كُونِي لِلشَّيْخِ مَسْعُودَ فَرَاشًا؛ لِيَكُونَ لَكَ غَطَاءٌ.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Lam taḥmil Ṣafiyyatu fī al-‘āmi al-awwali min zawājihā, mimmā asāra maḥāwifa wālidihi alaihi min qillati al-injābi./

‘Ṣafiyya did not conceive in the first year of her marriage, causing her father to worry about the lack of offspring.’

Ṣafiyya's inability to conceive immediately triggered Sheikh Mas‘ūd's father's concern because it threatened the clan's lineage. This is a form of biopower that monitors women's reproductive functions and judges them based on the productivity expected by the patriarchal system. This pressure, which originated from within the immediate family circle, shows how women's bodies became objects of strong regulation and normalization, where their "success" was measured by their biological capacity to produce heirs.

Domestic political power also works significantly on male bodies, especially those being prepared for leadership roles. One clear example of domestic political power over male bodies is through early formation and training for clan leadership roles. Sheikh Mājīd (Mājīd's grandfather), Mas‘ūd's father, paid close attention to this in the following

quote.

اهتمَّ الشَّيْخُ ماجد بتربية ابنه مسعود تربيةً سليمةً، تليقُ بأبناء الشَّيوخ، فقد علَّمهُ الفروسيةَ، وكان يُجلِّسه في حضنِهِ في الدَّيوان منذ بلغ الثالثةَ من عمره، كما كان يصطحبُهُ معه في زيارته للآخرين؛ كي يكتسبَ العاداتِ والتَّقاليدَ.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Ihtamma asy-Syaikhu Mājidu bitarbiyati ibnihi Mas'ūda tarbiyyatan salīmatan, talīqu bi abnā`i asy-syuyūkhi, fa qad allamahū al-furūsiyyata, wa kāna yujlisuhū fī ḥiḍnihī fī ad-Dīwāni munzu balaga aš-sālisata min umrihi, kamā kāna yaṣṭahibuhū ma'ahū fī ziyārātihī li al-ākharīna; kai yaktasiba al-'ādāti wa at-taqālida./

'Sheikh Mājid (Mājid's grandfather) paid close attention to his son Mas'ūd's education, ensuring he received a good education befitting the son of a sheikh. He taught him to ride horses and sat him on his lap in *the diwan* (assembly) from the age of three. He also took him to visit other people so that Mas'ūd could learn about customs and traditions.'

The above excerpt tells us that Mas'ūd's (Mājid's father) body was disciplined and shaped specifically through practices regulated by domestic politics. The main goal was to carry out future power and leadership. This body was trained and presented in public spaces as a symbol of status and honor, demonstrating the power that governed the lives and development of male individuals for the purposes of politics and clan power genealogy.

Religious Authority over the Body

In the novel's narrative, religious concepts and practices are used to justify and reinforce social norms related to the body, especially in relation to reproductive roles, honor, and social boundaries. Religion functions as a discourse that shapes understandings of what is right or proper for the body.

One form of religious power that works on the body is through restrictions on mobility based on biological conditions associated with purity. This is seen when Ṣafiyya, after giving birth, wants to go to the mosque but is forbidden by her mother. The following is an excerpt from the novel.

هل جُنِنْتَ يا صَفِيَّةُ؟ فكيف ستدخلين المسجدَ وأنتِ نَفْسَاءُ؟ شعرتُ صَفِيَّةُ بخطئها فقالت: أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ العظيمَ، لقدْ غابَ هذا عَنِّي.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Hal juninti yā Ṣafiyyatu? Fa kaifa satadkhulīna al-masjida wa anti nufasā'u? Sya'arat Ṣafiyyatu bikhaṭ'ihā fa qālat: 'Astagfiru Allāha al-'Aẓīma, laqad gāba hāzā 'annī.'/

'Are you crazy, Ṣafiyya? How will you enter the mosque while you are in nifas? Ṣafiyya felt guilty and said, 'I ask forgiveness from Allah the Almighty, this escaped my attention.'

The above quote clearly shows that religious rules relating to nifas (the period after childbirth) are used as a restriction on women's mobility and access to sacred spaces such as mosques. Although the rules of nifas are religious teachings, in this context they function as a mechanism of power that disciplines women's bodies. Women's bodies, in an unclean state after childbirth, are prohibited from entering certain spaces. This phenomenon is a form of normalization that refers to religious rules because women are regulated and classified based on their biological condition. Then, these teachings are linked to purity or impurity based on religious interpretation. Ṣafiyya, who feels guilty, shows the internalization of this norm because religious power does not need to be enforced directly but works through the subject's self-awareness.

Religious authority also justifies social practices such as dowries, framing them in terms of morality and protection. When Sheikh Muhaylan spoke about his daughter's dowry, he emphasized the religious aspect as justification. This incident is recorded in the following quote.

وَمِنْ خَوْفِ الْوُقُوعِ فِي الْحَرَامِ فَإِنَّ مَهْرَهَا لِيرَةٌ دَهَبٍ عِثْمَانِيَّةٍ. وَمُصَاهَرَتُكُمْ أَغْلَى مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَمِنْ الْأَغْنَامِ، وَزَوَاجِ الْبَنَاتِ لِلسِّتْرِ وَلَيْسَ لِلتَّجَارَةِ، وَلَنَقْرَأَ الْفَاتِحَةَ عَلَى هَذِهِ النِّيَّةِ.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Wa min khaufi al-wuqū'i fī al-ḥarāmi fa inna mahrahā līrata zahabin Uṣmāniyyatin. Wa muṣāharatukum aglā mina az-ḡahabi wa mina al-agnāmi, wa zawāji al-banāti li as-sitri wa laisa li at-tijārati, walnaqra' al-fātiḥata 'alā hāzihi an-niyyati./

'Due to fear of falling into what is forbidden, the dowry is one lira of Ottoman gold. Our kinship structures is more valuable than gold and sheep. The marriage of daughters is for protection, not for trade. Let us read Al-Fatihah for this intention.'

The above quote was spoken by Sheikh Muhaylan, showing how religious discourse is used to frame and justify marriage practices. Although there are material

values, such as gold lira and sheep, moral and religious values, namely fear of falling into what is forbidden, are used to normalize these practices and place them above material calculations. Women's bodies in these marriages are not traded, but protected, thus constituting a form of power that manages women's lives and welfare within the framework of religious norms. This shows how religious power functions to shape narratives that legitimize certain social practices related to women's bodies.

Body Power Based on Culture

The customs and traditions of Palestinian Bedouin society described in the novel explicitly restrict the movement and behavior of the body, clearly distinguishing them based on status and gender, and reinforcing social hierarchy. These traditions place women in a subordinate position when their bodies are regulated to be invisible or not to disturb male-dominated public spaces. In addition, culture also sets certain norms for the body based on social status or environmental demands.

One of the most obvious manifestations of cultural power is the spatial restriction of women's bodies in public spaces. Even during important celebrations, women are disciplined to remain hidden. The following is an excerpt from the novel.

عندما توافدت النساء ليقيم حفلات الرقص والغناء احتفاءً بالمولود ابن الشيخ، جلسن خلف البيت؛ كي لا يظهرن على الرجال المجتمعين في ديوان الشيخ في البيت المجاور.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/'Indamā tawāfadati an-nisā`u liyuqimna ḥaflāti ar-raqsi wa al-ḡinā`i ikhtifā`an bi al-maulūdi ibni asy-syaiki, jalasna ḥalfa al-baiti; kai lā yaẓharna 'alā ar-rijāli al-mujtami 'īna fī dīwāni asy-syaikhi fī al-baiti al-mujāwiri./

‘When the women came to hold a dance and singing party to celebrate the birth of the Sheikh's son, they sat behind the house; so as not to be seen by the men gathered in the Sheikh's *diwan* in the neighboring house.’

This quote is a classic example of how power can discipline and work through customs and traditions. Women's bodies are forced to remain in separate spaces, hidden from men in public spaces. These limitations demonstrate the physical and spatial restrictions imposed on women's bodies. The public sphere is the domain of men, while the smaller, more closed private sphere is the domain of women. This division of space is a system of power that disciplines women's bodies to remain hidden and not violate the

boundaries set by cultural norms. Thus, women's bodies are taught to obey existing boundaries, shaping their behavior and mobility in accordance with strong patriarchal norms.

Cultural power over the body also works to establish expectations and norms for the body based on social status, even from an early age. This can be seen in the way Sheikh Mas'ūd's grandson, Mājid, was treated, as described in the following excerpt.

أطفال الشيوخ لا يَجْبُونَ إِلَّا على فرشاتِ الصّوفِ أو الحرير .

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Atfālu asy-syuyūkhi lā yaḥbūna illā 'alā furasyāti aṣ-ṣūfi au al-ḥarīri./

'The children of sheikhs do not crawl except on wool or silk mattresses.'

The above quote shows that cultural norms related to social status influence interventions on children's bodies. This culture is reflected in the Bedouin tradition of placing the social status of the tribal chief's children above that of other children. Instead of letting Mājid crawl and develop his motor skills naturally on the ground, Ṣafiyya placed him on a luxurious mat. This behavior forms a disciplinary power applied through cultural habits that aim to protect and differentiate the body of the sheikh's child from ordinary children, even though it hinders his physical development, as in the case of Mājid who was late in crawling (as-Salhūt, 2024). Mājid's body was shaped by social expectations of luxury and excessive protection, creating weakness and triggering greater concern due to being overly pampered.

In addition, culture also shapes perceptions of the ideal or strong body in certain environments, even beyond conventional gender boundaries. This is evident from the observations of the Ottoman police about Bedouin women:

ابتسم الشرطي وهو يقول لزميله: ألا تلاحظُ أنّ نساء البوادي يتحلّين برشاقة الفُرسان، وجسارة المحاربين؟ ردّ عليه زميله: هذا ما تُملّيه عليهنّ طبيعة الظروف التي يعشنّ فيها، ولو كنّ عكس ذلك لهلكنّ في مرحلة الطفولة، ويبدو أنّ هذه المرأة بنتُ شيوخ .

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Ibtasama asy-syurṭiyyu wa huwa yaqūlu li zamīlihi: 'Alā tulāḥiẓu anna nisā`a al-bawādī yataḥallīna bi rasyāqati al-fursāni, wa jasārati al-muḥāribīna?' Radda alaihi zamīluhū: 'Hāzā mā tumlīhi alaihinna ṭabī'atu az-ẓurūfi allatī ya 'isyana fīhā, walau kunna 'aksa zālīka lahalakna fī marḥalati aṭ-tufūlati, wa yabdu anna ḥāẓihi al-mar`ata bintu syuyūkhin./

‘The Ottoman policeman smiled as he said to his colleague: 'Don't you notice that Bedouin women have the agility of horse riders and the courage of warriors?' His colleague replied: 'That is what the natural conditions of their environment demand. If not, they would perish in childhood. It seems that this woman is the sheikh's daughter.’

The above quote recounts the praise uttered by the Ottoman police officer after meeting Zubaidah, Mājid's grandmother. The praise describes the image of the Bedouin woman's body as constructed by culture, even from a non-Bedouin perspective. Their bodies are recognized as having the agility and courage necessary to survive in the desert environment. This demonstrates the adaptive power that shapes the body to survive. This assertion emphasizes that the bodies of Bedouin women must meet physical standards that demand endurance and strength, not just passive beauty. This form of power monitors and evaluates the body in relation to the survival of the group and normalizes the physical characteristics and behaviors that support this.

Power over the Mind in the Novel *al-Mā'iq*

Power over the mind (or power that works on subjectivity, knowledge, and discourse) in Foucault's framework refers to how discourse, knowledge, and practices of power shape the way individuals think, feel, and understand themselves and the world around them. This power is a process of forming obedient subjects through the internalization of norms and values that influence individual consciousness. Power over the mind in this novel is classified through domination, stigma, and manipulation, as evidenced by quotations from the novel.

Power over the Mind through Domination

Domination in power over the mind refers to a certain way of thinking being imposed or becoming the only widely accepted truth. Often this domination is through the authority of indisputable knowledge. This power works by instilling ideas or interpretations that then dominate individual understanding. Domination in the mind is seen when religious authorities provide definitive explanations about Mājid's condition that are accepted as truth and cannot be challenged. The following is a quote from the novel.

الإمام: هذا الضَّعْفُ الذي يعانيه هذا الطَّفلُ -والعلم عند الله- سببُهُ زواجُ القُرْبى المتكرَّر، وأسألُ

الله العفو والعافية لهذا الطفل، وأن تكون معاناته خفيفة. وأنا لا أستطيع مساعدته في شيء.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Al-Imāmu: 'Hāzā aḍ-ḍa'fu allazī yuānīhi hāzā aṭ-ṭiflu -wa al-'ilmu inda Allāhi-sababuhū zawāju al-qurbā al-mutakarriru, wa as'alu Allāha al-afwa wa al-āfiyata lihāzā aṭ-ṭifli, wa an takūna muānātuhū khafīfatan. Wa anā lā astaṭīu musa'adatahū fī syai'in.'/

'Imam: 'The weakness suffered by this child - and only Allah knows - is caused by repeated intermarriage. I ask for forgiveness and health for this child. May his suffering be light. I cannot help him at all.'

The above quote refers to when Ṣafīyya asked the Imam, a religious leader, to provide rukyat and prayers. However, the Imam's response shows that religious knowledge is used to produce truths that dominate understanding of the body and illness. Mājid's weakness is explained as a consequence of repeated intermarriage, a discourse supported by religious authorities and past traditions that refer to the words of Umar bin Khattab and Ibn Qudamah (as-Salhūt, 2024). The Imam's explanation has the power to normalize Mājid's condition within a moral and spiritual framework so that the thinking of families and communities is dominated by this interpretation. They accept that Mājid's condition is destiny or a consequence of certain practices that have been "judged" by religious knowledge.

The domination of thought also works through cultural norms that instill certain expectations in individuals, even from childhood, regarding their roles and values, which shape their view of themselves.

فقد جرت العادة أن لا أحد يُغرّد للبنات.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Faḡad jarati al-'ādatu an lā aḡada yuzagridu li al-banāti./

'It has become customary that no one cheers for girls.'

This statement is evidence of cultural norms that collectively dominate society's thinking about gender values. The absence of *zagarid* for the birth of a girl is not just an absence of sound, but a symbolic marker of the devaluation and neglect of women's bodies from birth. This practice instills in the minds of individuals, including women themselves, that their worth is different from that of men. This is a form of discriminatory power that works subtly to dominate thinking about gender hierarchy, so that women from

an early age internalize their subordinate position in the broader social order.

Power over the Mind through Stigma

Stigma is the process by which individuals or groups are labeled and categorized as negative or deviant by the discourse of power, thereby affecting their identity and social acceptance. Power operates by defining what is normal and abnormal in the collective mind. Mājid is a prime example of a victim of stigma in the novel. His physical condition, which is considered abnormal, triggers derogatory names and treatment that directly affect his identity.

ألا تلاحظان أنّ ماجداً -رعاؤه الله- مائتق قد تأخّر في الحبو، ومن هم في جيله كلّهم يحبون، حتّى ابنة فاطمة اللثغاء التي تصغره بأسبوع صارت تقف وتحاول المشي. والشيخ ماجد دائم البكاء لا يجلس إلا وأنت تمدّين رجلينك وتجلسينه بين ساقيك؛ لتحميه من الوقوع على أحد جانبيه.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Alā tulāḥizāni anna Mājida -raāhu Allāhu- mā'iqun qad ta'aḥḥara fī al-ḥabwi, wa man hum fī jīlihi kulluhum yaḥbūna, ḥattā ibnata Fāṭimata al-laṣḡā'ī allatī taṣḡiruhū bi usbū'in ṣārat taqīfu wa tuḥāwilu al-misya. Wa asy-Syaikhū Mājidu dā'imū al-bukā'ī lā yajlisu illā wa anti tamuddīna rijlayaiki wa tujlisīnahū baina sāqayaiki; litahmiyahū mina al-wuqūi alā aḥadi jānibaihi./

'Have you noticed that Majid—may Allah protect him—is slow to crawl, while everyone his age is crawling, even the talkative Fatima, who is a week younger than him, has started to stand and try to walk? And Majid always cries and refuses to sit unless you straighten your legs and sit him between them so that he does not fall sideways.'

This quote shows the initial process of Mājid's stigmatization, which occurred directly through observation and social comparison. Hajjah Ma'yufah, an elder in her clan, explicitly identified and articulated Mājid's deficiencies by comparing him negatively with other normal children, even with younger girls. This articulation, although well-intentioned, serves to produce knowledge about Mājid's abnormality in the minds of Ṣafiyya and Zubaidah. Constant comparison is a form of normalization that identifies Mājid's deviation from expected developmental standards. These statements shape negative perceptions of Mājid and lead to his identity stigma later in life.

Power over the Mind through Manipulation

Manipulation in the context of power over the mind refers to strategies used by

agents of power to manage perceptions, information, or situations in order to achieve certain goals. Often, manipulation is carried out without the full awareness of the manipulated individual. Manipulation in this novel involves the strategic production of truth. One of the most visible forms of manipulation is the attempt to manage Mājid's image and his acceptance in society, especially in the context of his strategic marriage. Here is an excerpt from the novel.

ارتاح ضميرُ الشيخ مسعود قليلاً؛ لأنّه أحضرَ ابنَهُ ماجداً معه، فقد رآته العروسُ ووالداها، ووافقوا عليه، وإذا ما اكتشفوا حاله مستقبلاً فسيجدُ مبرراً لنفسه، بأنهم رأوه ووافقوا عليه.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Irtāḥa ḍamīru asy-Syaikhi Masūda qalīlan; li annahu aḥḍara ibnahū Mājida ma'ahū, fa qad ra'athu al-'arūsū wa wālidāhā, wa wāfaqū 'alaihi, wa izā mā iktasyūfū ḥālahū mustaqbalan fa sayajidu mubarraran li nafsīhi, bi annahum ra a'uhu wa wāfaqū alaihi./

'Sheikh Mas'ūd felt a little relieved because he had brought his son, Majid, with him. The bride-to-be and her parents had seen him and agreed to him. If later they found out about his condition in the future, he would find a reason for himself, that they had seen him and agreed to him.'

Sheikh Mas'ūd's statement above explicitly shows the manipulation strategy employed by Sheikh Mas'ūd to manage other people's perceptions of Mājid. By bringing Mājid to be seen and approved directly by the bride's family, Sheikh Mas'ūd aimed to gain approval for the marriage. This strategy is the deliberate production of truth to control the narrative in the future, even if it means hiding Mājid's true condition. Power here operates through the management of information and appearance to influence the minds and acceptance of others.

The mother's advice to Ṣafīyya after her husband's second marriage is a clear example of the power of the mind based on manipulation to control the emotions of women who are disciplined and shaped by the discourse circulating in society.

الأمّ: تظاهري أُمّامَ الآخرينَ وأُمّامَ مسعودَ أنّك سعيدةٌ بزواجه من ثانية، تجملِي أُمّامَه، راقبي الطّريقَ وعندما يعودُ هو وعروسُهُ أطلّقي الزّغاريدَ، استقبليهما بالأحضانَ، باركي لهما، لا تُعاتبِيه، واطْهري أُمّامَه كما يحبُّ دائماً، ولا تُسمعيه إلّا الكلامَ الطّيبَ.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Al-Ummu: Taẓāharī amāma al-āḥarīna wa amāma Mas'ūda annaki saīdatun bizawājīhi min sāniyatīn, tajammalī amāmahū, rāqibī aṭ-ṭarīqa wa indamā yaūdu

huwa wa arūsuhū aṭliqī az-zagārīda, istaqbilīhimā bil-aḥḍāni, bārikī lahumā, lā tuātībīhi, wa aẓharī amāmahū kamā yuḥibbu dā'iman, wa lā tusmi'hi illā al-kalāma aṭ-ṭayyiba./

‘Mother Safiyya: ‘Pretend in front of others and in front of Mas'ud that you are happy with his second marriage. Adorn yourself in front of him, watch the road, and when Mas'ūd and his bride return, sing *zagharid*, welcome them with hugs, pray for blessings for them, do not criticize them, and show yourself in front of him as he always wants. Do not let him hear anything but good words.’

Zubaidah's advice to her daughter, Şafiyya, to be patient and pretend was a strategy produced by power to control individuals' internal responses. Şafiyya, whose heart was broken, was taught to suppress her feelings and perform in accordance with the norms for the sake of survival and protection within the patriarchal system. This incident is an example of subjectivation when individuals internalize norms and manipulate their thoughts and emotions.

Manipulation also occurs through the transmission of knowledge or advice aimed at directing individual behavior towards a specific goal, as Sheikh Sa'ifan did with Mājid in order to survive, as follows.

الشيخ سعيان: النصيحة الأولى: إياك أن تنام في وادٍ لا تعرف بدايته. الثانية: لا تأمن لأي شخص عيونه زرقاء، وخدوده برقاء، وأسنانه فرقاء. الثالثة: "نم على غيظ كيلا تُصبح على ندم.

(as-Salhūt, 2024)

/Asy-Syaiḥu Saīfān: ‘An-naṣīḥatu al-ūlā: Iyyāka an tanāma fī wāḍin lā tarifu bidāyatahū. Aṣ-ṣāniyah: Lā ta'man li'ayyi syakhṣin uyūnuhū zarqā'u, wa ḥudūduhū barqā'u, wa asnānuhū farqā'u. Aṣ-ṣālīṣah: "Nam alā gaẓīn kailā tuṣbiḥa `alā nadam.'/

‘Sheikh Sa'ifan: ‘First piece of advice, never sleep in a valley whose beginning you do not know. Second, never trust anyone with blue eyes, bright cheeks, and gap teeth. Third, sleep in anger so that you will not regret it in the morning.’

The advice given by Sheikh Sa'aifan to Mājid is a form of manipulation in terms of strategic knowledge production for behavioral control. Although presented as advice, it is designed to shape Mājid's way of thinking about self-preservation and social interaction in unfamiliar environments. The third piece of advice, in particular, serves to discipline emotions (anger) and prevent impulsive actions, which is highly relevant given Mājid's previous circumstances that led to his expulsion from his village. Power here operates not through direct coercion, but through the provision of information that shapes

Mājid's consciousness and decisions, making him a subject who manages himself according to the truths taught to him.

CONCLUSION

The reading of Jamīl as-Salhūt's *al-Mā'iq* demonstrates how everyday cultural practices shape power over both body and mind within Palestinian Bedouin society. The novel shows that women and men are disciplined through different but equally restrictive norms: women are associated with reproduction, while men are expected to fulfill rigid ideals of masculinity. Beyond these roles, social rules, religious beliefs, and clan traditions guide how individuals think, act, and are judged within their community. In this way, the novel illustrates how power works less through external coercion than through internalized systems of discipline that become part of daily life.

This study contributes to existing scholarship by addressing the limited attention given to how power over the body and mind is represented in Palestinian Bedouin literature through a Foucauldian perspective. The findings demonstrate that kinship structures, religious norms, and clan traditions function as interconnected mechanisms of disciplinary power that shape both bodily practices and mental subjectivity in everyday life. By highlighting these cultural mechanisms, this study extends Foucauldian literary criticism beyond its more common focus on modern institutions and contributes to a deeper understanding of power, culture, and identity in Palestinian literature and Middle Eastern cultural studies.

At the same time, the research has limitations. Its analysis is confined to a single novel, and thus the findings cannot be generalized to all Palestinian or Arab contexts. Future research could extend this approach by examining a wider range of texts, such as poetry, plays, films, or by comparing the works of different authors. Further studies might also combine literary analysis with other disciplines, such as sociology or media studies, to gain a fuller picture of how power over body and mind is represented and reproduced across different cultural settings.

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