

<a href="https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.27.2025.317">https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.27.2025.317</a>			
Received:	23 October 2024	Accepted:	20 February 2025
Revised:	15 December 2024	Published:	15 June 2025
Volume:	27 (June)	Pages:	51-64
<b>To cite:</b>			
Fadlil Munawwar Manshur. 2025. Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian relations in the perspective of cultural conflict. <i>International Journal of Islamic Thought</i> . Vol. 27 (June): 51-64.			

## Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian Relations in The Perspective of Cultural Conflict

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the relation between the Jewish-Israeli nation and the Arab-Palestinian nation through an analysis of cultural conflict. Furthermore, the elements of Jewish-Israeli cultural identity and Arab-Palestinian cultural identity warrant discussion, as the two identities, despite their proximity, are historically and genealogically in perpetual struggle. Jewish-Israeli culture is fundamentally constructed and evolved through Arab-Palestinian culture. This perspective is very painful due to the ongoing marginalization and eradication of Arab-Palestinian culture facilitated by Jewish-Israeli cultural initiatives. This figurative perspective is seen in the disregard for Arab-Palestinians among Jewish-Israelis. Furthermore, initiatives aim to internalize and value Arab-Palestinian culture within the context of Jewish-Israeli culture in the socio-cultural landscape. This examination of the relationship between Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian culture is exemplified by the process of mimicry, when the colonized nation adopts, internalizes, and adapts the traits of the colonizers. This situation necessitates consideration of how the relationship between Jews and Israelis as colonists seeks to adopt, assimilate, and adapt the attributes of the Arab-Palestinian people they colonize.*

**Keywords:** Arab-Palestinian, cultural adoption, cultural conflict, Israeli literature, Jewish-Israeli.

A nation does not arise in isolation; it requires a social group to constitute it. The establishment of a nation occurs through social groups. The establishment of a nation and the evolution of its national identity is a complex and continuous process. This process culminates in the amalgamation of concepts, individuals, and customs (Warren & Gilmore, 2014). These concepts and customs disseminate through language and social movements, fostering a collective awareness of history, values, and common identity (Anderson, 1983). The establishment of a nation is facilitated by the documentation of history and national narratives, alongside the development of myths, traditions, and symbols to reinforce national identity (Hobsbawm, 1983). The existence of a nation must be upheld, preserved, and reinforced by national ideologies, necessitating a continual reminder of its identity through cultural representations that are perpetually repeated across diverse mediums, including coins, monuments, texts, and images (Billig, 1995). The discourse on national identity and the perspectives of Arab and Israeli nations is seen as crucial for the preservation of their respective existences. Furthermore, to reinforce the

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presence of the Arab and Israeli countries, it is imperative to thoughtfully evaluate national consciousness and the methodical advancement of national culture (Gelvin, 2014).

National identity is fundamentally defined by the subject “self” and the object “the other.” Concerning national identity, it is essential to consider the perspectives of Ozkirimli (2023) and Edward Said (1995:332), who assert that the evolution and preservation of any culture necessitate the presence of a distinct and rival alter ego. It is now a sociological and political reality that the cultivation and preservation of cultural and national identity necessitates engagement with the “other,” despite the latter often being portrayed and conceived as an adversary (Dolgopolski, 2018). This constructed national identity is not monolithic or fixed; rather, it is perpetually assessed, reproduced, and expressed in response to ongoing cultural and socioeconomic events and developments (Mendel & Ranta, 2016:30).

In the discourse on national identity, it is crucial to acknowledge Edward Said’s assertion that Jewish-Israeli culture is fundamentally constructed concerning Arab-Palestinian culture. This perspective is intriguing as it reveals the tragedy inherent in the internalization of Arab Palestinians through the marginalization and eradication of their culture. Edward Said’s perspective might be seen metaphorically as the disregard for Arab-Palestinians in the consciousness of Jewish-Israelis, alongside their absorption and self-valuation within the framework of Jewish-Israeli culture. This examination of the link between Israeli and Arab culture exemplifies the mimicking process articulated by Bhabha (1990). Bhabha examines how colonized individuals assimilate, internalize, and modify the characteristics of their colonizers. This situation necessitates consideration of the inverted connection between Israel and Arabs, specifically how Israel, as a colonizer, assimilates, internalizes, and modifies the characteristics of the Arabs it colonizes (Mendel & Ranta, 2016).

Cultural superiority is the belief that one’s own culture is superior to another (Boehmer, 2005). Cultural groups perceive their own culture as superior, encompassing customs, language, and religion. The notion of cultural superiority can incite conflict among cultural groups, as they evaluate others by their own cultural standards and deem their own culture superior; this is referred to as ethnocentrism. Schroeter (2011) asserts that ethnocentrism is a contributing factor to cultural and ethnic conflicts. The phenomenon of cultural supremacy frequently leads to conflict, as each cultural group has distinct objectives. Longhurst (2017) asserts that disparities in the interests of community groups lead to cultural conflicts.

Cultural superiority is intrinsically linked to racism since it has been asserted that “culture and conflict are interconnected in the examination of race and racism.” The advantageous aspect of cultural superiority is the pride in one’s own culture, the preservation of ancestral customs, and the commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage from obsolescence. Cultural superiority and racism can incite inter-cultural and inter-racial conflict. This study presents three issues: How has Israel’s cultural supremacy and racism contributed to cultural and racial conflicts between Arab-Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis? What distinguishes the Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian conflicts from religious conflicts, and why are these disputes mostly territorial, originating from the period following World War I until 1948?

Secondly, why are Palestinian citizens of Israel granted Israeli citizenship and voting rights, while the Israeli government persists in treating them as second-class citizens? Why are the majority of Palestinians subjected to Israeli military governance that constrains their mobility and infringes upon their rights to employment, expression, and association? What are the reasons for the Israeli government’s discrimination against the Arab-Palestinian people in the allocation of resources for education, healthcare, public works, municipal governance, and economic development in the Arab sector? Third, what accounts for the significant transformation in the Israeli literary movement as illustrated in Ilai Rowner’s 2015 novel, *Deserter*? In what manner does Ilai Rowner, as an author, elevate the issue of desertion and examine the national framework, while establishing a new foundation for the life of Israeli society? What is the author’s rationale for employing the motif of desertion to signify his quest for a non-national identity? What makes the novel *Deserter* a symbol of the resurgence of Israeli literature? What is the trajectory of the evolution and advancement of Israeli literature, which manifests not only in its

novels but also in its critical poetry that offers incisive critiques of the Israeli government's policy against the Palestinian people?

### Literature Review

Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe (2011:3) assert in their work "Culture of Resistance in Palestine and Beyond: on the Politics of Art, Aesthetics, and Affectivity" that developments in Palestinian cultural production, particularly within the Palestinian culture of resistance, exemplify the intrinsic connection between art and politics. Nevertheless, the majority of mainstream academic literature addressing the political and cultural systems of the Arab world often neglects the cultural-political nexus. Despite notable exceptions, many studies predominantly emphasize formal politics, high-level diplomacy, political parties, and non-governmental organizations, thereby neglecting alternative and informal political expressions and subaltern political subjectivities (Nilsen, 2015). The article "The Conception of Palestine from The Late Bronze Age to The Modern Period" by Nur Masalha (2016:1) asserts that the notion of Palestine is profoundly embedded in the collective consciousness of the indigenous Palestinian populace and its diverse historical background. The designation Palestine has been predominantly utilized from the Late Bronze Age, approximately 1300 BC. The designation Palestine is prominently represented in numerous historical accounts, inscriptions, cartographic representations, and currency from ancient, medieval, and contemporary Palestine. Beginning in the Late Bronze Age, the designations for the region, including Djahi, Retenu, and Kana'an, were supplanted by the term *Palestina*. During Classical Antiquity, the designation *Palestina* was predominant, and throughout the Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic eras, the notion and political geography of Palestine acquired formal governmental recognition.

The article "Palestinian Literature: A Chronicle of Permanent Exile and Setbacks," authored by Khaled M Masood (2022:2), asserts that the chronological evolution of Palestinian literature is notably linked to the realms of geopolitics, international politics, and Palestinian aesthetics. This aims to document individuals from the past who endured hardships and were banished from their homeland. This essay examines the comprehension of Palestinian literature to elucidate the impact of Palestinian authors. The narrative reenacts the Palestinian past, articulates their identity, and explores significant topics, including the British Mandate until 1948, its repercussions through the 1967 Six-Day War, and the enduring occupation to the present day.

In the article entitled "Contemporary Israeli Literature as a Mirror of the Arabs' Images and the Perception of the Israeli-Arab Conflict in Israeli Society" written by Israel Ben Dor (2002) it is said that the perception and image of Arabs in Israeli society and the State of Israel is one of the keys to understanding the Israeli-Arab conflict. One of the discoveries available to historians who study the historical development of images is that literary works, and especially novels, are sources of perception that apply to discussing this issue throughout time. The author's unique sensitivity in observing the 'Zeitgeist' (the Spirit of the Age) that documents the worldview and image of his generation, creates moving texts that often provide a much more significant perspective than ordinary historical sources. In recent years, many novels have been published that discuss the Israeli-Arab conflict, including (a) *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, by Amos Oz (2014); (b) *Until the End of the Land*, by David Grossman (2008); and (c) *1948*, by Yoram Kaniuk (2010). These three novels are very popular, have sold well, and have been translated into several world languages. Together, the three novels describe a broad effort to embrace the 130-year-old Israeli-Arab conflict. The novels contain biographical material reflect the personal experiences of the authors and, to some extent, contain self-criticism of Israeli society. Based on the literature review, it can be said that our article entitled "Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian Relations in the Perspective of Cultural Conflict" has not discussed it specifically. Cultural conflict is dislike, hostility, or conflict between communities that have different philosophies and ways of life, resulting in conflicting aspirations and behaviors (Johnson & Zellen, 2014). This idea comes from sociological conflict theory and anthropological concepts of intercultural relations. The intensive development of modern urban society as part of the globalization trend often causes rapid changes in national culture in regions of a country. The negative consequences of modernization

and globalization are the contribution to the intensification of conflicts caused by alternative perceptions of the world determined by different cultural value systems and beliefs. Including axio-normative conditions, cultural conflicts are often triggered by the socio-economic situation of a particular society or nation. For conflict to occur, there must be direct interaction between at least two different cultures (Banaszkiewicz & Buczkowska, 2016:1). The Arab-Israeli conflict such as the Yom Kippur War and the Ramadan War was a movement for the national liberation of the Jewish people (McIntyre, 1981). Zionism is racism related to the managed and occupied territories. This can be seen in the West Bank, Southern Syria, Judea, and Samaria are territories occupied by Israel. Sometimes it is said about conflict when it is only symbolic. As if symbols are not at the center of most conflicts and are inseparable from material aspects. Every conflict occurs in a certain symbolic environment. Political discourse around the Arab-Israeli conflict refers to the catalog of available idea elements and uses various symbolic devices to express these ideas. This collection of idea elements, organized and grouped in various ways, forms a political culture of conflict (Gamson, 1981:3).

The relationship between the Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian nations, viewed through the lens of cultural conflict, fundamentally represents a contest for symbolic power. This involves the Jewish-Israeli identity as a colonizing entity exhibiting persistent territorial aspirations within a colonial context, juxtaposed with the Arab-Palestinian identity as a colonized group engaged in unwavering resistance against the colonizers. Moreover, the elements of modernization and globalization significantly contribute to the intensifying conflict between the Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian nations, stemming from divergent cultural values and belief systems.

### **Method**

In the context of Jewish-Israeli relations with Arab-Palestinians, it is essential to articulate a comprehensive assertion to delineate the cultural framework of conflict in the Middle East region with clarity. According to Salzman (2008:1), all Middle Eastern civilizations are influenced by a Bedouin and pastoral ethos rooted in tribalism. This is predicated on two primary analytical methods: the “balanced opposition method” and the “affiliative solidarity method.” The “balanced opposition method” is defined as a social structure where groups perceive themselves in contrast to other groups. This analytical method encompasses broader concepts, such as constitutionalism and state-centered citizenship, which are minimally represented in the group’s self-perception. The “affiliation solidarity method” is defined by an alliance framework rooted in loyalty to familial proximity, whereby near families receive assistance against more distant families, and distant families receive support against other entities.

This research elucidates the operation of the “balanced opposition method,” which unveils the social structure of the Jewish-Israeli country, enabling them to comprehend their own power concerning the Arab-Palestinian nation. This analytical approach is founded on the idea that Arabs in the state of Israel possess the right to citizenship. This “balanced opposition” analytical approach positions Jewish-Israelis as a nation that must consider its non-Jewish citizens (Arabs) residing in Israel, despite their historical classification as adversaries. The “affiliation solidarity method” relies on the allegiance of the Arab-Palestinian populace towards their Arab counterparts who assist one another in resisting the Israeli oppressors. In this “affiliation solidarity method,” Arabs away from the state of Palestine, along with Arab families even further removed, concur to collaborate in opposing the Israeli occupiers. This research aims to elucidate the phenomenon of the Jewish-Israeli cultural conflict and Arab-Palestinian culture, while also examining Palestinian citizens concerning Israeli identity and the assimilation of Arab culture, as well as the evolution of Israeli literature from a cultural-political standpoint in the Middle East.

## Results and Discussion

### The Phenomenon of Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian Cultural Conflict

The cultural superiority and racism carried out by Israel have the potential to cause cultural and racial conflict between Arab Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The conflict between Arab Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis is a modern phenomenon, which has occurred since the end of the 19th century (Rogan & Shlaim, 2007). Although the two racial groups have different religions (Palestinians are Muslim, Christian, and Druze), while Israelis are almost all Jewish, religious differences are not the cause of the conflict. The conflict began with the issue of territorial disputes. Since the end of World War I until 1948, the territory claimed by both groups was known internationally as Palestine. The same name is also used to refer to the "Holy Land" which is not well defined by the three monotheistic religions, namely Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. After the 1948–1949 war, the region was divided into three parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014:1). The Palestinian territories are small, approximately 10,000 square miles, or roughly the size of the U.S. state of Maryland (Masalha, 2016). The competing claims to the territory are irreconcilable if one group exercises exclusive political control over the entire territory. Jewish claims to the land are based on the biblical promise to Abraham and his descendants. According to Jewish belief, there is a "fact" that the land is the historical site of the ancient Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judea, and there is a need for Jews to have a refuge from the massive anti-Semitism in Europe (Montville, 2018).

The Palestinian Arabs' claims to the land are based on their continuous residence in the country for hundreds of years and the fact that they represented the demographic majority until 1948. They reject the idea that biblical kingdoms are the basis for legitimate modern claims. If the Arabs engage in biblical arguments, they argue that because Abraham's son Ishmael was the ancestor of the Arabs, God's promise of land to Abraham's children also includes Arabs. They do not believe that they should give up their land to compensate the Jews for European crimes against the Jews (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). In the 19th century, following trends that had emerged earlier in Europe, people around the world began to identify themselves as nations demanding national rights, especially the right to govern themselves in their own countries in a spirit of self-determination and sovereignty. Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs began to develop national consciousnesses that mobilized themselves to achieve national goals.

Since Jews were scattered throughout the world (diaspora), the Jewish national movement, or Zionist trend, sought to identify a place where Jews could gather through immigration and settlement (Shelleg, 2021). Palestine seemed a logical and optimal place because it was the place of origin of the Jews. The Zionist movement began in 1882 with the first wave of European Jewish immigration to Palestine (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). At the time of the first wave of European Jewish immigration to Palestine, the Palestinian territories were part of the Ottoman Empire, but they did not form a single political entity. The northern districts of Acre and Nablus were part of the Beirut province. The Jerusalem district was under the direct authority of the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, because the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem had international significance as religious centers for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. According to Ottoman records, in 1878 there were 462,465 permanent residents in the districts of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre: 403,795 Muslims (including Druze), 43,659 Christians, and 15,011 Jews. In addition, there were probably 10,000 Jews of foreign nationality (new immigrants to the country) and several thousand Muslim Arab nomads (Bedouins) who were not counted as Ottoman citizens. Most of the Arabs (Muslims and Christians) lived in a few hundred rural areas. Jaffa and Nablus were the two largest and most economically important cities with Arab majorities (Pappe, 2022).

Until the early 20th century, the majority of Jews living in Palestine were concentrated in four cities of religious significance: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. Most of them practiced traditional and Orthodox religions. Many Jews devoted their time to studying religious texts and relied on the charity of world Jewry for their survival. Their attachment to the land was more religious than national, and they did not participate in, or support, the Zionist movement that

began in Europe and was brought to Palestine by immigrants. Most Jews who emigrated from Europe lived a more secular lifestyle and were committed to the goal of creating a modern Jewish state and establishing an independent Jewish nation. By the outbreak of World War I (1914), the Jewish population in Palestine had increased to about 60,000, about 36,000 of whom were new settlers. The Arab population in 1914 was 683,000 (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). By the early 20th century, Palestine had become a troubled region due to competing territorial claims and political interests. The Ottoman Empire was weakening, and European powers were tightening their grip on territories along the eastern Mediterranean, including Palestine. During 1915–16, as World War I was underway, the British high commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, corresponded secretly with Husayn ibn 'Ali, the patriarch of the Hashemite family and the Ottoman governor of Mecca and Medina. McMahon convinced Husayn to lead an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, which was allied with Germany against Britain and France in the war. McMahon promised that if the Arabs supported Britain in the war, the British government would support the establishment of an independent Arab state under Hashemite rule in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine.

The Arab revolt, led by Husayn's son Faysal and T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"), defeated the Ottomans, and Britain controlled much of the region during World War I (Green, 2011). However, Britain made other promises during the war that contradicted the Husayn-McMahon understanding. In 1917, the British foreign secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, issued a declaration (the Balfour Declaration) declaring his government's support for the establishment of a "Jewish national home in Palestine." A third promise, in the form of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, was a secret agreement between Britain and France to partition the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and share control of the territories. After the war, Britain and France convinced the new League of Nations (the predecessor to the United Nations), by which time they were the dominant powers, and they were given quasi-colonial authority over the former Ottoman territories. The British and French regimes became known as mandates. France gained a mandate over Syria, separating Lebanon as a separate Christian-majority state. Britain gained a mandate over Iraq, as well as the territories that now include Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jordan (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). The term refers to Arabs, Christians, Muslims, and Druze, whose historical roots can be traced to the territory of Palestine as defined by the British mandate boundaries. Approximately 5.6 million Palestinians live in this territory, divided between the state of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza; the latter was captured and occupied by Israel in 1967. At the time, more than 1.4 million Palestinians were Israeli citizens, living within the country's 1949 armistice borders and comprising about 20 percent of its population. About 2.6 million lived in the West Bank (including 200,000 in East Jerusalem) and about 1.6 million in the Gaza Strip. The remaining Palestinian population, approximately 5.6 million, lived in the diaspora, outside the country they claimed as their national homeland.

The most substantial Palestinian diaspora community resides in Jordan, with around 2.7 million individuals in refugee camps created in 1949, while others inhabit major urban areas (Mavroudi, 2023). Lebanon and Syria host significant Palestinian populations, many of whom continue to reside in refugee camps. A significant number of Palestinians have relocated to Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf nations seeking employment, while others have migrated to different regions of the Middle East or elsewhere globally. Jordan is the sole Arab nation that confers citizenship to Palestinians residing within its borders. Palestinians in Arab nations typically do not possess the same rights as the inhabitants of those nations. The plight of refugees in Lebanon is severe; numerous Lebanese attribute the civil war that devastated the nation from 1975 to 1991 to the Palestinians and insist on their resettlement elsewhere to preserve peace in Lebanon. Certain segments of Lebanon's Christian populace are keen to expel the predominantly Muslim Palestinians, apprehensive that they may jeopardize the delicate equilibrium among the nation's religious factions. Since the onset of the uprising against the regime in 2011, Palestinians in Syria have been ensnared in the conflict. Although numerous Palestinians continue to reside in refugee camps and impoverished areas, others have achieved economic prosperity. Palestinians currently possess the highest per capita rate of university graduates in the Arab world (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014).

## Palestinian Citizenship, Israeli Identity, and the Adoption of Arab Culture

By 1948, only about 150,000 Palestinians remained in the territories that were Israeli citizens. They were granted Israeli citizenship and the right to vote. But in many ways, they were and remain second-class citizens, since Israel defines itself as the Jewish state and the state of the Jewish people, and the Palestinians are non-Jewish. Until 1966, most of them were subject to military rule that restricted their movement and other rights (to work, speak, associate, and so on). Arabs were not allowed full membership in Israel's trade union federation, the *Histadrut*, until 1965. About 40 percent of their land was confiscated by the state and used for development projects that benefited Jews primarily or exclusively (Shalev, 1992). All Israeli governments have discriminated against the Arab population by allocating far fewer resources to education, health care, public works, municipal administration, and economic development for the Arab sector.

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel have struggled to maintain their cultural and political identity in a country that officially considers any expression of Palestinian or Arab national sentiment to be subversive. Until 1967, they were completely isolated from the Arab world and were often viewed by other Arabs as traitors for living in Israel. Since 1967, many have become more aware of their identity as Palestinians. One important expression of this identity was the holding of a general strike on March 30, 1976, designated Land Day, to protest the ongoing confiscation of Arab land. Israeli security forces killed six Arab citizens on that day. All Palestinians have since commemorated it as a national holiday. In recent years, in Israel, Nakba Day has been commemorated as the day from which more than half of the Arab population of Palestine was expelled in 1948, which has since become an illegal act committed by Israel against the Palestinian population (Manna, 2022). Israel's Central Election Committee has on several occasions used overtly political criteria to rule that Arab citizens whose views are deemed unacceptable should not be allowed to run in parliamentary elections. Although in all cases the decisions were overturned by the Supreme Court, they contributed to anti-Arab hysteria and anti-democratic sentiment, which increased dramatically among Israeli Jews after 2000 (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014:5).

Throughout Israel's existence, its leaders and institutions have been obsessed with its character and identity. Israeli society needed justification for the existence of the "Jewish State in the Land of Israel" or as first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion called it in Hebrew מדינת יהודית בארץ ישראל. The Jewish state that later became the state of Israel was able to stand, among other things, because of the arrival of immigrant groups, especially from Eastern Europe, who provided a strong impetus for the creation of unifying national symbols and the creation of local Israeli culture and identity. Therefore, since the emergence of Zionism in Palestine, and during the years leading up to and following the establishment of the state of Israel, nationalist Jewish thought was closely intertwined with the creation of a unique Jewish national identity, and a unique local culture or *sabra* culture as well. This process included, among other things, the revival and transformation of Hebrew into a modern national language and the everyday language used by those who 'returned' to the "old-new homeland". In this regard, the Israelis used the *Altneuland* theory initiated by Theodore Herzl which succeeded in constructing unifying Jewish national symbols. These national symbols include, among others, the blue and white flag with the Star of David, the establishment of El-Al as Israel's national airline which is a symbol of 'blue and white', the establishment of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the 'melting pot of Israeli society', which became a focal point for the developing state and society (Mendel & Ranta, 2016:10).

The character and identity of the Israeli country are reflected in artistic performances, television programs, Jewish-Israeli institutions, and cultures encompassing traditions, products, and national standards. The character and identity of Israel reveal notable anxieties, concerns, and limitations of the Israeli nation. In this context, numerous cultural, social, and gastronomic elements and conventions designated as 'Israeli' are associated with Arab culture or Middle Eastern heritage. An illustration is the prominence of 'Israeli' cuisines like falafel and hummus, which stem from Arab and Arab-Palestinian culinary traditions, alongside other Israeli dishes such as *shawarma* and *burekas* (*börek*), which have their origins in Turkish culture. Consequently,

the foods that Jewish-Israelis regard as emblems of their distinct local culture and identity were, a century ago, commonly recognized and embraced as components of Arab and Arab-Palestinian culinary traditions or as part of the wider Middle Eastern or Ottoman-Turkish gastronomic heritage (Gelvin, 2014).

This phenomenon is exemplified not only by Israeli cuisine but also by various cultural artifacts and symbols that Israeli Jews regard as distinctive and fundamental, which are predominantly rooted in Arab culture and history, particularly from indigenous Arab-Palestinian culture. Israeli objects and symbols are derived and modified from Arab culture broadly, and from indigenous Arab-Palestinian culture specifically, to represent the 'locality' and 'authenticity' of Israeli Jewish culture. The adoption of Arab and Arab-Palestinian items and symbols is notable as it opposes the predominant negative sentiments exhibited by Israeli Jews towards Arabs and Arab-Palestinians. It also defies the overarching framework of socio-political life in Israel, particularly the prolonged Arab-Israeli violent conflict. Furthermore, the strained communal relations and pervasive hostility exhibited by Israel towards its Arab-Palestinian citizens, coupled with Israeli orientalism, reinforce the perception of the cultural and technological superiority of the Jewish-Israeli 'West' over the Arab 'East,' which is deemed regressive.

The hubris of Israel is exemplified in the remarks of former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who likened Israel in the Middle East to 'a villa in the middle of the forest' (Mendel & Ranta, 2016:12). Ehud Barak's speech illustrates that this figurative expression has shaped the mindset of major Zionist leaders for the past century, reflecting the perspective of Zionism and Israel towards the Arab populace, particularly the Arab-Palestinians. Theodor Herzl, a principal architect of Zionism, asserted that the primary objective of creating a Jewish state in Palestine was to serve as a 'barrier against Eastern barbarism' (Olson, 2021; Shumsky, 2018). Furthermore, Zeev Jabotinsky, the leader of the Zionist Revisionists, contended that the ancestry of the Jewish people is European Ashkenazi, unrelated to the "East" or Arabs. This declaration by the Zionist leaders distinctly exemplifies the perception of Jewish Zionists as superior to the Arab-Palestinian territory conquered by Israel, as well as to the indigenous Arab populace and culture.

The diverse anti-Arab sentiments and representations in Jewish-Israeli society, in addition to the political and military spheres, can also be seen clearly in cultural products. These sentiments and representations vary, for example in literary works, in Israeli films, and in the famous Israeli children's book series *Hasamba*, Arabs are clearly depicted as enemies or villains or as stupid people (Cohen, 1985: 25). This representation also includes the depiction of Arabs in Israeli school textbooks as 'evil enemies,' 'dirty,' 'primitive,' 'restless,' 'aggressive.' Thus, Arabs are generally considered as 'villains,' while Jewish-Israelis are considered as their 'victims' (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 225; Tal, Daniel, & Teichman, 2006: 170). The perception of the inferiority of Arabs, especially Palestinian Arabs, is also part of Jewish-Israeli popular culture and everyday language. For example, the common expression "*Avoda 'Aravit'* meaning 'Arab worker' in Hebrew, is used to describe shoddy, unfinished, and imperfect work.

Lastly, even the word 'Arab' or the phrase 'Ya 'Aravi' (literally 'you Arab') has become a derogatory term for Arabs used by Jewish-Israelis. These terms are often used as an expression of bad play among Israeli children, as well as being used as a way to criticize someone's appearance, such as a woman wearing excessive jewelry, or a man of Mizrahi origin. In other words, it seems that in Jewish-Israeli society, the term 'like an Arab' is almost automatically derogatory because it usually generalizes Arabs and labels them with almost exclusively negative characteristics (Mendel & Ranta, 2016:13). Therefore, from this contradiction, the hatred and contempt shown towards Arab culture on the one hand, and the image of Jewish-Israeli culture as superior on the other hand, have become social realities. Thus, currently in Israel, there is a movement of Jewish-Israeli society that is anti-Arab-Palestinian and a movement of Jewish-Israeli rejection of the Arab world in general and the Arab-Palestinian in particular. It has prompted researchers to dig deeper into the dichotomous cultural relationship between Arabs and Israelis and the need for deeper research into the various layers of Israeli identity, with a focus on symbols and the creation of anti-Arab symbols in Israel. Israel's ambivalence towards the Arab world in general, and towards Arab-Palestinians in particular, is not a new academic issue. There needs to be deeper research into how Arab culture has seeped into Israeli culture, which is based

on the lyrics of the singer and songwriter, Meir Ariel. For example, Meir Ariel in his song *Shir Ke'ev*, at the end of each sentence sings in Hebrew describing an Arab sitting with a *nargilah* or *shisha*. *Shisha* or more popularly known as hookah is a smoking method originating from the Middle East. The method is by using a water pipe and smoke chamber, bowl, pipe, and hose.

In terms of gastronomy (food culture), the contribution of Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture to Israeli culture and identity is quite large. Facts about Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture such as food, cultural practices, and community traditions have been adopted and celebrated as Israeli culture by the Jewish-Israeli community. It turns out that Israeli food culture is shaped by Arab food culture. After the de-Arabization movement, typical Arab food turned into typical Israeli cultural food (Rogan & Shlaim, 2007). This means that elements of Arab and Arab-Palestinian food culture were initially adopted and adapted by Zionist settlers who claimed them as original Zionist-Israeli cultural products. These elements of food culture eventually became synonymous with Jewish-Israeli food culture and national identity. As a result, the origins and contributions of Arab and Arab-Palestinians in terms of food culture were marginalized or completely erased.

The phenomenon of Arab and Arab-Palestinian cultural contributions to Israeli culture and identity is not limited to food, but is much broader, and includes other areas, such as national symbols, culture, and language. In terms of typical Israeli food, for example, Jaffa cake, a cake the size of a typical British biscuit, covered with orange jelly which later became one of Israel's national symbols, even though there are no orange groves in modern Jaffa, Israel. The question arises, where did these Jaffa oranges come from? It turns out that the orange groves in Jaffa, Israel, came from the gardens of Jaffa, Palestine before 1948. So, these Israeli Jaffa oranges are the result of adoption and de-Arabization carried out by Israel which were then marketed with their trademarks as completely Israeli products. The phenomenon of cultural adaptation leading to the appropriation of Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture by Jewish-Israelis also has broader implications. The cultural appropriation by Jewish-Israelis of Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture is an act of crystallization of Jewish-Israeli national identity and culture that is dialectical and hegemonic in culture and politics (Mi'ari, 2009).

The network of cultural interactions between Israel-Palestine and Arab-Israelis at present and in the future needs to be expanded to include security, economic, and political issues. Why is this cultural interaction considered important? Because in reality there are still many Israeli national and cultural symbols that are confrontational towards Arabs and Arab-Palestinians. The closeness of Arab and Israeli culture is greatly disturbed by the emergence of images on Israeli television screens using Hebrew whose content demeans and insults Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture. The movement of demeaning Arab and Arab-Palestinian culture is also exaggerated in the pages of Hebrew-language newspapers (Al-Hardan, 2016). This Israeli action has clearly destroyed the Arab-Palestinian roots. To what extent is the Arab-Palestinian identity and culture influenced by Israel-Zionism? In this case, there are many cases of cultural dissemination influenced by Jewish-Israeli culture. One example is the most extraordinary adaptation and appropriation of culture carried out by Jewish-Israelis which is reflected in novels written by leading Israeli novelists.

### Israeli Literature in Cultural-Political Perspective

In recent years, a new literary trend in Israeli novels has attempted to break out of the dominance of the old protagonists of Israeli literature. Novels such as Lilach Netanel's *Old Homeland* (2014), Eshkol Nevo's *Neuland* (2011), Dorit Rabinian's *All the Rivers* (2014), Ron Dahan's *To See a Whale* (2016), Shira Pinkas' *Orian* (2014) and Ma'ayab Ben Hagai's *Walkman* (2017), all written by a new generation of writers, depict the stories of young Israeli men and women who decide to leave Israel and try to live permanently abroad. Although the topos of travel or life abroad can be traced in some canonical Israeli novels, such as Ya'acov Shabtai's *Past Perfect* (1984), Abraham B. Yehoshua's *Return from India* (1994) or Ronit Matalon's *One Facing Us* (1995), the new trend reflects a major shift in the view of the land of Israel. For the protagonists, in the view of younger

writers, Israel is no longer the main center of their lives because they feel that their safety is not guaranteed if they return to Israel, their own country, and they are sometimes rejected outright by the Israeli government. This approach may be part of a larger Israeli literary movement toward deterritorialization and increased attention to other settings of literary production. It is also possible to recall the historical roots of Hebrew literature in Odessa or in 19th-century Berlin.

In exploring the contours of this recent Israeli literary movement, the focus will be on Ilai Rowner's latest novel, *Deserter*, published in 2015 and shortlisted for the prestigious Sapir Prize in Literature in 2016. Ilai Rowner, born in 1979, is a young Israeli writer, translator, and scholar of French literature. *Deserter*, his first novel, explores the theme of desertion as a means of exploring national structures and finding new grounds for the existence of Israeli society. However, the desertion of the main character and his search for a non-national identity ultimately reach a dead end, a literary dead end that reflects the current state of political consciousness among young Israeli writers who describe political exile in contemporary Israeli novels (Stav, 2018:391). Israeli literature has not only developed through novels but also through poems created by young Israeli poets, most of which criticize the Israeli government's policies towards Palestine. In Israeli poems, it is stated that the dreams of Israeli poets were not fulfilled because of the dubious political policies imposed by the hegemonic British colonial power. Historically, the British colonial strategy to divide and rule Palestine before World War II by intensifying the conflict in Palestine was aimed at widening the gap between Arabs and Jews. Due to British colonial policies, Jews and Palestinians could not reach an agreement on their attitude towards the British occupation. They could not expel the British colonialists from Palestine and as a result, they were forced to face the possibility of dividing the country or living in a multinational state with dual citizenship (Gohar, 2014:1).

Significant currents and movements in the Middle East preceding the Second World War profoundly influenced the geopolitical history of the region, particularly concerning Palestine. Similar to the First World War, which was a significant historical event that provoked divergent perspectives on the political destiny of the Middle East, the Second World War also had consequential implications. The exigencies of the war necessitated the intervention of European countries in the Middle East while they were consolidating the political, social, and economic resources required to fortify their strategic positions. While this program appeared to reinforce European dominance over their colonial territories in the Middle East in the short term, the First World War ultimately marked the decline of European imperial authority. Post-war, the fatigued European powers, particularly Britain and France, were devoid of the resources and resolve to sustain their control over the Middle East, which had previously appeared essential to their security and colonial ambitions (Tripp, 1991:88). In a pertinent context, the famous Israeli novelist Amos Oz contends that the interaction between the Arabs and the Jewish settlers did not mirror an epic or a Western narrative, but rather resembled a Greek tragedy. The discord between justice and tragedy precludes any possibility of reconciliation among the British colonialists, Arabs, and Jewish-Israelis (Coffin, 1982:319).

During a conversation with Amos Oz, he sought to comprehend the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He contended that the Arab-Israeli conflict was significantly shaped by prior clashes between Arabs and European colonialists throughout the colonial period, as well as by the terrible experiences of Jews and the extermination of European Jews during the Holocaust. Amos Oz contended that his struggle was not about territory or symbolic emotions, but rather that Arabs and Israelis should overlook the animosity between the two nations. Amos Oz thinks that the present Arab-Palestinian conflict with Jewish-Israelis is an extension of presumptuous European colonialism. Both belligerent nations perceive their animosity as a continuation of their tragic histories. Both Israelis and Arabs contend with the legacies of their shared history, specifically British colonialism in the Middle East (Coffin, 1982:332). Despite instances of dissatisfaction and pessimism, both Israeli and Arab literature before 1948 exhibited a profound desire for harmony between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Early Israeli literature portrayed Arabs as romantic, exotic Oriental beings; but, more pragmatic representations of Arabs emerged in the socialist/realist literature of the late 1940s and 1950s. Hostile depictions predominate in both Arab and Israeli literature produced between 1948 and 1973.

However, the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, in the mid-1970s, has marked the beginning of a new era of greater understanding and tolerance between the two sides of the conflict, which is reflected in its literary production. However, there is no doubt that the existence of militant organizations and regimes that advocate violence on both sides, in addition to the rise of political Islam and the Jihad movement in Palestine under the great impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran since the 1980s have complicated the situation in the Middle East. Despite the violence and bloodshed, there are positive solutions taking place in the political arena and many promising developments in the field of civil society activities on both sides that bring a better future and more understanding and tolerance at least between the two peoples (Gohar, 2014:3). In an attempt to counter the misunderstandings and stereotypes that hinder cultural dialogue between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, Ghassan Kanafani, in *Returning to Haifa*, does not succumb to the literary tradition that views Jews as militant Zionists. Here, he uses the discourse of reconciliation by creating positive Jewish characters such as Miriam and Iphrat, two Holocaust survivors, in an attempt to carve out a morally viable narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict. By placing Miriam, Iphrat – and their adopted son, Dov – at the center of his novel, Kanafani aims to dismantle the traditional local conception of Jews as Zionist invaders on a par with other European colonizers. Furthermore, the Holocaust motif is introduced forcefully and passionately in an Arab novel about the Palestinian tragedy to highlight the parallel between human catastrophe and suffering.

Convinced that Arabs are unable to distinguish between white settlers in South Africa and Jews fleeing European anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust, Kanafani, in *Returning to Haifa*, expresses a desire to build a new future, a desire that reveals an identification with other victims and those who are humiliated. The novel's idealized depiction of Jewish characters and its representation of Jews as individuals and human beings signifies a sympathetic understanding that will hopefully develop into a better and more understood one for both sides of the conflict in Palestine (Gohar, 2014:10). In a related context, the novel *Returning to Haifa* is a testimony that undermines the claim about anti-Semitism in Arabic literature on the Palestine-Israel issue. Zionist scholars such as Neville Mandel and others argue that Palestinian hostility towards Israel is not the result of anti-Semitic sentiments, but because the former regards the latter as an occupier occupying the Palestinian territory. Clearly, in Palestinian literature and culture, there is no anti-Semitism in the Western sense simply because the issue of race is completely excluded from the Arab-Israeli conflict which is rooted in political grounds. The hostile attitude towards Israel in Palestinian literature historically stems from the misconception that all Hebrew citizens, without exception, are militant Zionists hell-bent on displacing Palestinians from their land. This claim was introduced into the school curriculum and propagated by state media in the Arab world after the 1948 war and the establishment of Israel. Since the Palestine-Israel conflict is more of a political issue than a racial one, Palestinians approach Israelis in the same way that Algerians approached French colonizers during the era of imperialism (Gohar, 2014:10).

Consequently, Palestinian animosity towards Israel, and vice versa, stems not from anti-Semitic feelings, but rather from Israel's forcible acquisition of Palestinian territory. This is unequivocally demonstrated by the absence of an anti-Semitic movement within Palestinian literature and culture. The conflict between Israel and Palestine stems from racial animosity and territorial politics.

To conclude, the cultural hegemony and racism perpetrated by Israel have incited cultural and racial discord between Arab Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The discord between Arab-Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis has persisted since the late 19th century. Some Arab-Palestinians identify as Muslim, some as Christian, and some as Druze, whereas nearly all Israelis are Jewish. Nonetheless, religious disparities do not constitute the root of the dispute. The rivalry between the two nations originated from territorial disputes that persisted from the conclusion of World War I until 1948. Palestine is regarded as the "Holy Land" by the three monotheistic faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. After the 1948–49 conflict, the Palestinian lands were partitioned into three regions: Israel, the West Bank (next to the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip. Palestinians who acquired Israeli citizenship were conferred the ability to vote. Nonetheless, Palestinians

continue to be regarded as second-class citizens, as Israel identifies itself as a Jewish state and the nation of the Jewish people, whilst Palestinians are classified as non-Jewish. Palestinians are predominantly governed by Israeli military authority, which constrains their mobility and other rights, including employment, expression, and association. Approximately 40 percent of Palestinians have experienced land confiscation by Israel, which is utilized for construction projects that solely benefit Jewish individuals. The Israeli government has exhibited discrimination against the Arab-Palestinian people by disproportionately giving fewer resources to education, healthcare, public works, municipalities, and economic development within the Arab sector.

A significant transformation has occurred in the Israeli literary movement, exemplified by Ilai Rowner's recent novel *Deserter*, which examines the issue of desertion to investigate the national framework and establish new foundations for the existence of Israeli society. The protagonist's abandonment represents his quest for a non-national identity that eventually culminates in futility. This impasse reflects the evolution of Israeli writing that embodies the contemporary political awareness among young Israeli authors. The Israeli novel embodies the political exile of modern Israel. Israeli literature has evolved not only through novels but also through poetry composed by young Israeli poets, the majority of which critique the Israeli government's stance regarding Palestine. The Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian populations perceive themselves as collective victims, attributing to one another the role of aggressors responsible for intentional, grave, and unfair injury. The collective memory of the Jewish people encompasses the profound trauma of the Holocaust and persists as a victim of nearly 2,500 years of documented oppression and brutality. Intergenerational continuity is visible when Jewish and Arab fathers enlist their sons in warfare. Young Jews and Arabs consistently embrace confrontational tactics, despite their firm belief that violence would not resolve the problem. Nonetheless, adults from both groups exhibit a complex internal state characterized by fatigue, fatalism, sadness, and disorientation.

### Acknowledgments

We express our sincere thanks to colleagues who have shared their thoughts, participated in discussions, and provided constructive comments. All these contributions were invaluable in improving and improving this manuscript.

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