

**| RESEARCH ARTICLE****Reimagining Fables: Power and Intertextual Dialogues in *Kalila and Dimna* and Eggers' Narrative****Hela Salih Alkhider***Assistant Professor in Contemporary Literature & Literary Theory and Criticism, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraydah, Saudi Arabia***Corresponding Author:** Hela Salih Alkhider, **E-mail:** [h.alkhadar@qu.edu.sa](mailto:h.alkhadar@qu.edu.sa)**| ABSTRACT**

This study examines the intertextual deployment of the fable in a contemporary narrative through a comparative reading of *Kalila and Dimna* and Dave Eggers' *The Eyes of the Impossible*. Classical fables such as *Kalila and Dimna* have exerted a sustained influence on literary traditions across cultures, shaping moral discourse, narrative authority, and representations of power. Drawing on cultural theory, comparative literature, and close textual analysis, the study applies a Foucauldian and intertextual framework to examine how power is constructed, negotiated, and contested in both texts. Through allegory and anthropomorphic characterization, the two works explore hierarchical relations, social conflict, and the psychological dimensions of authority. The analysis demonstrates that while *Kalila and Dimna* foregrounds power through counsel, balance, and hierarchical order, Eggers reconfigures fable conventions to address modern mechanisms of control, including surveillance, institutional regulation, and habitus. By expanding the fable beyond moral instruction, Eggers transforms it into a critical narrative form that interrogates freedom, individual agency, and the relational nature of authority. The study concludes that both texts ultimately emphasize balance, consultation, and imaginative freedom as essential conditions for just and sustainable power.

**| KEYWORDS**Power dynamics, intertextuality, fable, politics, *Kalila and Dimna***| ARTICLE INFORMATION****ACCEPTED:** 01 January 2026**PUBLISHED:** 18 January 2026**DOI:** [10.32996/ijts.2026.6.1.1](https://doi.org/10.32996/ijts.2026.6.1.1)**Introduction**

Fables are fictional stories that teach moral lessons about human actions. They are brief and straightforward, but their insights are deep and significant. Typically, these stories feature animals with exaggerated traits, and these nonhuman characters are often anthropomorphized, exhibiting human qualities. Most fables date back to ancient times and civilizations, where stories such as Aesop's Fables or *Kalila and Dimna* (a collection of stories in Sanskrit) were written and flourished. Modern writers and scholars have since continued this tradition and refined its form by incorporating contemporary elements. The influence of these fables and their form is evident and transparent, whether between the old and modern times or between the East and West as they travel across countries and cultures. This study compares the ancient Eastern fable, *Kalila and Dimna*, with the modern Western allegory, Dave Eggers' *The Eye of the Impossible*. Its purpose is to show how traditional fables are revived in contemporary literature and to explore how cultural differences influence character portrayal and moral lessons. The study emphasizes how both works frequently employ symbolism and character roles, examining their cultural and symbolic significance within their unique context. *Kalila and Dimna*'s stories have profoundly influenced literature across numerous cultures and languages. Meanwhile, *The Eye of the Impossible*, a recent all-ages book published in 2023, features animal

characters and provides profound insights into moral complexities and social hierarchies, echoing the themes of *Kalila and Dimna* but set within different cultural contexts.

*Kalila and Dimna* and *The Eyes and The Impossible* are two stories from different times and cultures; however, they share similar archetypal symbols that illustrate dynamic social relationships among animals. *Kalila and Dimna* is a traditional collection of fables dating back to an ancient Sanskrit work by Indian scholar Vishnu Sharma from approximately the third century BC. Then, the work was translated into Arabic by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa, and the Arabic version was known as *Kalila and Dimna*. The main structure of the tales is a broader story where a king seeks advice from a wise counselor on how to govern effectively and fairly. The stories delve into political and social values using fable and allegory. The main characters are Kalila and Dimana, two jackals who engage in various adventures to reflect human nature. In return, *The Eyes and the Impossible*, by American author Dave Eggers, is a single narrative that blends adventure and magic realism. It revolves around the story of a dog named Johannes, who is the fastest in the park and symbolizes the eye's perspective, observing and reporting on the three Bison, the park's keepers. The story explores themes of perception and self-awareness, echoing the political and social allegories found in *Kalila and Dimna*. In both works, dynamic social connections are depicted through the animals, which frequently exhibit human-like traits. These relationships reflect the cultural values and social conventions that give rise to them, highlighting moral lessons, though the messages vary depending on the cultural context. This study aims to deepen our understanding of the role of children's stories, particularly those featuring animal characters, in raising questions and representing power dynamics and imbalances within human social communities. Some authors use children's stories as a tool to suggest, in an indirect way, solutions and influential practices for complex and conflicted power distributions and dynamics within various settings, whether personal relationships or organizational structures. By examining power dynamics in two narratives, this study explores how these dynamics have been represented, questioned, and negotiated in relationships in fables across different texts and historical periods.

Currently, two primary criticisms of Dave Eggers' novels exist: one focuses on how he depicts dystopian versus utopian visions, alongside themes of capitalism and power, viewed through Foucault's lens of power and knowledge. Other efforts to explore his emphasis on human rights involve experimenting with different perspectives, such as meta-modernism. Most of these studies focus extensively on his novels, *The Circle* and *The Every*. This study aims to fill the gap by focusing on his book *The Eyes of the Impossible* and examining power dynamics within the context of psychological and social relations. This study explores how Eggers uses a children's story to reflect his interests in portraying power dynamics and imbalances through animal characterization, suggesting solutions and alternatives. Despite Eggers' assertion at the beginning of his novel and in many interviews that his book is "a work of fiction. No places are real places. No animals are real animals... no animals symbolize people" (*The Eyes and the Impossible*, preface), this study raises the following questions: How does Eggers' text allude to and reference *Kalila and Dimna*? How does Eggers' novel depict power dynamics and embody the relationships between power and character? How does the author use narrative voice to reflect or critique power dynamics? Are there marginalized or silenced voices that represent issues of inequality and imbalance? This study advances the fields of comparative literature and intertextuality by demonstrating that Eggers' work incorporates plot and character elements inspired by *Kalila and Dimna*, while updating its structure to align with modern preferences. Eggers' novel uses this story as a framework to explore themes of inequality, exploitation, dependency, imbalance, and the struggle for autonomy, challenging and critiquing modern social and political ideologies. By comparing and identifying references, this study demonstrates how the two texts connect and engage in conversation, drawing on their themes, characters, and possibly the authors' intentions. The study highlights the similarities among these texts. It emphasizes the importance of using children's stories, especially animal-themed ones, to illustrate and grasp conflicts and inequalities within broader political and social contexts.

## **Literature Review**

Eggers is widely recognized for blending compelling storytelling with strong political and social engagement, often depicting how individuals are shaped by powerful institutions such as governments, corporations, and digital platforms. Scholars are particularly interested in his work because it combines literary innovation with contemporary cultural critique, examining themes like humanitarian crises, surveillance, displacement, and technological power. Through books like *What Is the What*, *Zeitoun*, and *The Circle*, Eggers has become a key figure in post-millennial American literature, valued for his ability to illuminate complex power dynamics with clarity, empathy, and moral urgency. The recurring themes in Eggers's novels fall into two categories: one explores his critique of power and authority within communities and political systems, depicting a world characterized by chaos and a dystopian outlook. At the same time, the other focuses on humanism and humanitarian issues. A critical study of the first section is "Anti-Utopian Outlook in *The Every* by Dave Eggers" (2025) by Lushnikora and Osadchaia. This research analyzes Eggers' novel within the frameworks of utopia, anti-utopia, and dystopia, arguing that the core features of anti-utopianism are effectively portrayed in the story. The constructed anti-utopian world in the novel combines anti-utopian elements with realistic

features, infusing it with satire and absurdity, and advancing the theme of totalitarian power. Another notable study is "Ne\*Foucauldian Power in *The Circle* by Dave Eggers" (2023). This study analyzes Eggers' *The Circle* through Foucault's perspective on power and knowledge, highlighting how knowledge becomes a tool or medium for attaining power and how a technologically vibrant company gains power through digital knowledge, thereby bringing about a revolution in a democratic society. The second interest of Eggers' thematic concern is human rights, the portrayal of humanism, and the exploration of new lenses, such as meta-modernism. "Transhumanism in Dave Eggers' *The Circle* Utopia vs. Dystopia, Dream vs. Nightmare" (2018) by Carmen Lagurata-Bueno explores how Eggers' novel addresses the potential dangers of transhumanism and warns about the impact of social media tools and surveillance devices on humans in contemporary society. The author argues that although Eggers' novel portrays the dehumanization that human enhancement technologies bring about, it also warns that these technologies limit human freedom and privacy, leading to the neglect of genuine human relationships. This study highlights the significance of embodied human experiences and the fortunes of the technological world. Additionally, the study titled "Surveillance Capitalism: A Critical Analysis of *The Circle* by Dave Eggers" (2025) is also another influential study in this regard that examines Eggers's novel through the framework of Shoshana Zuboff's influential theory of 'surveillance capitalism'. The article argues that Eggers dramatizes this economic and social system through the fictional tech corporation 'the Circle', showing how the company normalizes total transparency and the elimination of privacy. As the study explains, *The Circle* reveals how digital platforms present surveillance as a desirable feature, promising safety, connection, and efficiency, while secretly gaining unprecedented power over individuals' lives, choices, and identities.

*The Eyes of the Impossible*, a Newbery Medal winner, has received limited scholarly attention. Aside from a few reviews, no academic articles discuss it, despite its award. This paper aims to fill a gap in literary analysis by examining the novel within a broader context, emphasizing its genre as a fable. While critics often favor dystopian realism and darker narratives for social critique, Dave Eggers's *The Eyes and the Impossible* challenges this trend by using fable and animal allegory to explore themes like control, freedom, and institutional power. The undervaluation of such children's allegorical fiction highlights a genre bias that overlooks its subtle ability to address human behavior and systemic injustice. Delivered through the voice of a free-running dog in a city park, the story's allegorical framework encourages readers to question human institutions and ethical control, avoiding typical dystopian gloom. This study asserts that critics tend to underestimate the thematic richness of these works, favoring bleakness over imagination and allegory. It also explores the relationship between *The Eyes of the Impossible* and *Kalila and Dimna*, analyzing their similarities and differences, especially regarding how power, authority, and institutional control are exercised, challenged, or negotiated through the characters.

## Theoretical Background

The concept of power dynamics in literary culture can be connected to Michel Foucault's idea that power exists everywhere, not just held but also actively exercised through discourse, institutions, and the production of knowledge. In his book "Discipline and Punish" (1975), Foucault states that power is productive, operating through language, institutions, and knowledge systems. He sees power as pervasive and embedded in daily practices, emphasizing its role beyond mere repression. Instead, it appears through discourse, surveillance, and the regulation of bodies and behaviors, which he calls disciplinary power and biopower. His view of power as relational, widespread, and rooted in discourse has become a key concept in literary studies, where analyzing power dynamics involves examining how characters or ideologies struggle for power and how these struggles influence the plot, themes, and character development. Understanding power dynamics is crucial for addressing social inequalities, resolving conflicts, and improving effective communication and collaboration.

Echoing Foucault's analysis of power dynamics, Pierre Bourdieu extends the concept to encompass cultural and social practices, emphasizing that individuals possess various forms of capital - economic, social, cultural, and symbolic- that shape their standing within fields. At the same time, their 'habitus' helps perpetuate inequality. He argues that institutions and cultural norms reproduce social hierarchies by rewarding those who already possess dominant cultural capital, making power seem merit-based while hiding structural inequalities. His concepts of power dynamics center on how social inequality is subtly and invisibly reproduced through everyday practices, cultural norms, and forms of capital. One of Bourdieu's key ideas central to this study is 'habitus', or 'the embodied system of dispositions', which refers to the ways of thinking, acting, and perceiving that individuals acquire through upbringing and experience. 'Habitus' shapes individuals' perspectives, values, beliefs about their potential, and social navigation. As it becomes ingrained in the body, affecting posture, manners, tastes, language, confidence, and hesitation, it often operates below conscious awareness.

Hannah Arendt complements Foucault and Bourdieu's concepts of power dynamics and contributes to their definition, asserting that power arises when people act together in public life. Arendt defines power as the human ability to act in concert. To her, power exists only as long as people are united, supporting, and participating in a shared purpose. Her argument highlights that power is separate from violence or authority, relying on people's ongoing support for a group or institution; without their

consent, power weakens and eventually falls apart. In Arendt's view, action is a free and unpredictable activity through which individuals disclose their identities and create political power together in the public realm. Arendt's relational power enables people to collaborate, legitimize decisions, sustain communities, experience political freedom, and reshape their shared world. Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory offers a valuable perspective for understanding the tensions and struggles in relationships. According to Dahrendorf, an unequal distribution of power leads to ongoing conflicts that can take many forms. All concepts of Foucault's 'surveillance', Weber's 'habitus', and Arendt's 'action' deepen our understanding of Eggers' representation of power dynamics and characters' interrelations in his novel.

To deepen our analysis of power dynamics in Eggers' selected novel, it is helpful to consider intertextuality within children's literature, fables, and moral stories. Intertextuality has become a core concept in literary theory, shaping how texts are read, interpreted, and contextualized within broader cultural and historical contexts. Introduced by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s and influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, intertextuality challenges the view of a text as an isolated or original creation. Instead, it sees every literary work as naturally connected to other texts through a network of references, quotations, echoes, and adaptations. Bakhtin laid the groundwork by asserting that all texts and utterances interact through dialogue, emphasizing that "the text lives only by coming into contact with another text" (1986, p.162). Building on this, Kristeva further developed the idea through her concept of intertextuality, noting that "a text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (1980, p. 66). Scholars like Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette have expanded on this concept by emphasizing the reader's role in identifying textual connections and focusing more on textuality than on the author's intent. In comparative literature, intertextuality acts as a key analytical tool for tracing thematic, structural, and ideological connections across different literary traditions and eras. It shows how texts interact with past and present works, either reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives. This approach is beneficial when examining issues of power, identity, and resistance, as it demonstrates how authors relate their works to cultural memory, literary canon, and political discourse. Overall, intertextuality enriches textual analysis and broadens understanding of literary texts as dynamic, relational practices.

The concept of 'fable' is also central to this analysis. Fables are short, allegorical stories that often feature animals with human qualities and are intended to teach moral lessons. Aesop, among the earliest known fable narrators, used anthropomorphism and instructive storytelling to promote virtues such as honesty, prudence, and justice, often with clear morals. In modern scholarship, Jack Zipes interprets fables through cultural pedagogy, ideology, and norm transmission, highlighting their role in socializing individuals, endorsing accepted behaviors, and either challenging or supporting power structures. In his 1983 book, "Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization," he claims that fables influence ethical views, pass on social norms, and can subvert or critique authority and inequality, thereby playing a key part in moral, cultural, and psychological development. Bruno Bettelheim also analyzes fables from a psychoanalytic perspective, showing how they externalize children's fears, impulses, and moral conflicts, aiding emotional and ethical growth while fostering virtue and resilience. Overall, these scholars demonstrate that fables remain essential tools for morality, cultural reflection, and psychological development. Eggers' *The Eyes and the Impossible* stands out in children's literature as a notable novel that explores power struggles and imbalances within political systems and social ideologies, while also offering profound insights into psychological growth. Therefore, this study can be placed at the intersection of three interconnected areas: children's literature and intertextuality, power dynamics, and fable morality.

## **Methodology**

This study explores the relationship between Dave Eggers' *The Eyes and the Impossible* and *Kalila and Dimna*. It highlights how Eggers' novel draws on *Kalila and Dimna* in its character portrayal and themes, despite the cultural differences between the eras. Both works contribute to a broader discussion on power dynamics and the ideas of power and authority within the fable genre. By examining how each piece reflects and questions aspects of the other, the study demonstrates how cultural stories and ideological discourses are maintained or challenged over time and in different contexts. This enhances our understanding of the novel's meaning, significance, and literary innovation as Eggers writes a children's story for the first time.

This study argues that a power-dynamics reading of *The Eyes and the Impossible* is necessary to understand the significance of Eggers' work in the context of fable. It employs tools from cultural theory, comparative literature, and textual analysis to examine how power dynamics are constructed, represented, and challenged in selected literary works. To achieve this goal, the study applies a theoretical framework that incorporates Foucauldian ideas of power and comparative intertextuality. By combining close reading with contextual interpretation, the researcher shows how power functions discursively within and across texts. It highlights both the institutional and ideological forces in the stories and how identities are shaped within these frameworks. Foucault's view of power as diffuse, relational, and productive—rather than just repressive—informs the analysis of how power operates within and through discourses in the work. This method enables a rigorous examination of the text, addressing not only explicit hierarchies and mechanisms of control but also the nuanced, everyday processes through which identities and

subjectivities are constructed and regulated. Through comparative intertextual analysis and by highlighting Kristeva's concept that every text interacts with others, it becomes evident that Foucault's theory of 'surveillance', Bourdieu's framework of 'habitus', and Arendt's perspective on 'action' collectively illuminate how power is entrenched within language and institutional structures across both contexts. They also assist in pinpointing disciplinary mechanisms like surveillance and regulation. This approach offers a powerful perspective for analyzing the intricate relationships between personal identity, institutional authority, and social status texts.

This study significantly advances academic conversation about how power dynamics are depicted in children's literature, especially in fables. By analyzing the classic fable *Kalila and Dimna*, the examination expands the scope of Eggers's renowned work and provides new insights into themes such as power. By integrating frameworks such as power dynamics, intertextuality, and fable studies, this approach allows the analysis to move beyond basic interpretations of power or identity. It facilitates an examination of how literature conveys nuanced meanings through both its structural elements and thematic content. This methodology provides a thorough means to explore the relationships among narratives—whether they reinforce, contest, or enrich one another—within the larger context of cultural expression.

### Analysis

Dave Eggers' *The Eyes and the Impossible* draws on the classic fable of *Kalila and Dimna*. This study examines the similarities and connections between the two works, highlighting how Eggers revives the traditional fable in a contemporary literary context. By analyzing shared central themes, narrative techniques, genre, and symbolic figures in *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Eyes and the Impossible*, this study explores how the traits and development of key characters serve as symbols and reflections of larger themes and qualities, especially power dynamics. This comparison underscores the ongoing importance of allegory in exploring universal human traits like fear, control, and loyalty. It demonstrates that fables—whether ancient or modern—offer timeless insights into social and moral dynamics. This perspective challenges the idea that only modern dystopian realism can address complex topics. Although these characters are animals, they display human traits such as perception, wisdom, jealousy, and cunning. Their interactions mirror human conflicts and dilemmas, helping readers understand their motivations and actions. The relationships among the characters serve as microcosms of human social behavior, offering insights into human psychology. Eggers' statement—that the animals in the novel do not represent human beings or symbolize their qualities and behaviors because they, according to him, are just animals representing themselves—requires reconsideration. This can be achieved by comparing his choice of animals, their roles, and symbolic meanings with those in other classical fables, such as *Kalila and Dimna*, Aesop's fable, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Such a comparison will deepen understanding of Eggers' work and reveal how it depicts power dynamics within fables and allegories.

Both texts, *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Eyes and the Impossible*, are fable-like stories that use allegory to highlight moral lessons and philosophical themes. Their main characters are given human traits to reflect social relationships within communities. Both authors employ similar characters to illustrate power relations within groups and to symbolize the search for fairness, balance, and harmony. However, they present these universal themes in different ways. The structure of *Kalila and Dimna* is set within two frames. The first occurs when King Daplishm asks his counselor for advice, and the advisor narrates a series of stories to promote ethical and moral growth through the actions and consequences of animal characters. These tales use traditional allegory to convey wisdom, moral lessons, and ethical values. In contrast, *The Eyes and the Impossible* is a modern novel that combines contemporary storytelling techniques, blending fantasy with realism and deep insight, following one character's journey of self-awareness and perception. Johannes, a free-spirited dog who serves as the "Eyes" of a city park, watches over its balance. Guided by three wise bison, he works with other animals to protect the park from disruptive human changes. When the bison are caged, Johannes leads a daring mission to free them. In the end, he sets off toward the unknown, embracing freedom and new adventures. This seaside park in the city is inspired by Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. It is a mix of wilderness and civilization, natural landscapes and human-made features. While *Kalila and Dimna* features a series of separate stories with distinct moral lessons, *The Eyes of the Impossible* adopts a quest structure centered on the hero's journey, exploring deeper psychological themes and delivering its morals more subtly and indirectly.

Despite their differences, *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Eyes and the Impossible* share some thematic elements and use similar cultural symbols in their stories. For instance, "The Lion and the Bull," one of the seven stories in *Kalila and Dimna*, presents a perspective on power dynamics akin to that between the Dog, the three Bison in the city park, and the human. Several stories in *Kalila and Dimna*, paralleling *The Eyes and the Impossible*, also delve into themes like fear, anxiety, friendship, cooperation, environmental harmony, and the impact of thought and personal growth. A common theme is the pursuit of justice, freedom, and balance, notably illustrated in the story of "A Ringed Dove" in *Kalila and Dimna*, which will be discussed later. Both texts also utilize animal symbols and settings to reflect societal values and norms. For example, a story about a wise, benevolent ruler might symbolize cultural ideals of wisdom and leadership, while a corrupt or deceptive character could embody societal fears or

criticisms. These allusions deepen the reader's understanding. Although both texts employ similar animal symbolism, their use differs because of distinct cultural biases and social contexts that mirror societal values and expectations.

"The Lion and the Bull" exemplifies how allegory and animal fables in *Kalila and Dimna* convey enduring moral lessons. It highlights themes such as power dynamics, the repercussions of deception, and the value of trust and loyalty. Like many others in the collection, this story offers a moral lesson through the actions and interactions of animal characters. The lion represents an influential and authoritative figure, while the bull symbolizes a strong but more passive character. The Jackal (Dimna) is a malevolent force who plays a vital role in the story. In his talk with the lion, he states this hierarchical relationship: "I am like the earth, and you are like the sun and the cloud. I will give forth flowers and tulips if you cultivate me" (Munshi, 2019,8). The lion represents the dominant and authoritative figure in the story. As the king of the beasts, he wields both literal and symbolic power, reflecting leadership, control, and authority over the other animals in the forest. The lion's position grants him significant influence and the ability to make decisions that affect the lives of others. As the narrator demonstrates, "In the vicinity of that meadow was a lion, and there were many other beasts, all of whom obeyed the lion, who was young and good-looking but rather opinionated" (Munshi, 2019,4). The sense of power in *Kalila and Dimna* seems linked to physical strength and to social or political authority maintained through the continuity of social structures across generations. The lion's dominance is preserved not by coercion but through everyday practices, reflecting Bourdieu's concept of power as embedded in daily habits and social norms. The bull, along with the other animals, surrenders to his command without question. Despite being depicted as powerful and assertive, the bull is the lion's subordinate. He is the companion and supporter of the lion, even though he does not share the same political power. Although the bull relies on the lion's protection and favor, having become friends and living in harmony, this power imbalance makes him vulnerable to the lion's actions and decisions. Consequently, the bull is initially susceptible to manipulation and unfair treatment, ultimately leading to a tragic end. Dimna, the jackal, represents an external force that distorts the close relationship between the lion and the bull. He uses his cunning to manipulate the lion's perception of the bull, sowing discord and mistrust. Dimna's deceitful tactics leverage the lion's authority to destabilize the existing power structure. His betrayal and deception undermine the bull's position. These elements demonstrate that authoritative power often appears tyrannical and oppressive when it fails to use legitimacy or fair administrative measures. The story conveys a moral about the responsible use of power and the consequences of allowing deceit to influence decisions. It is a cautionary story emphasizing the importance of maintaining trust and being wary of those who might exploit power for their own gain. The lion's authoritative position, the bull's subordinate role, and Dimna's manipulative influence create a scenario in which trust is broken, and relationships become fractured and unbalanced. This negotiated and exercised power, characterized by authority, fear, anxiety, and unfairness, embodies the relationships between the governor and the governed, the leader and the follower, the center and the periphery, and the oppressed in human society. The story highlights a hierarchical structure that reflects the rigidity of human relationships in society, underscoring the critical need to establish justice and balance within communities while practicing power and control. The sense of power in this story relates to force, domination, authority, and control despite resistance; however, it is exercised socially and symbolically, echoing Foucault's and Bourdieu's ideas of power.

In Dave Eggers's *The Eyes and the Impossible*, power dynamics are represented through the interrelationships among characters, their actions, and their positions within the narrative. Johannes – the hero – is a free, independent, and reliable dog. Even though he is not human, he is highly active in watching and reporting on the park on behalf of the Bison. His role as a reporter and observer, defining himself as "I am the Eyes," aligns with Foucault's idea of surveillance as a mechanism of power that operates less through violence and more through observation, because surveillance is not just about watching people; it is about shaping behavior (Eggers, 2023, 35). Not only is he a reporter and vigilant observer, which empowers him, but Johannes's speed and freedom also help him ensure the park runs smoothly for his leader and other animals. His mindset and behavior are characterized by quickness, agility, and keen deduction, shaped by his upbringing in this balance. This approach maintains his position among animals, aligning with Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' that reproduces social hierarchies by making dominant norms appear natural, with power embedded in 'habitus' as a symbolic force. The three Bison represent the leaders and keepers of the park, whose power is rooted in their wisdom and in their ability to offer guidance and harmony. Eggers seems to reference the 'Bull' in *Kalila and Dimna*, attempting to portray an alternative image of the passive 'Bull'. He aims to reinterpret this character from a different angle and move away from the usual portrayal of subservience. In *Kalila and Dimna*, the 'Bull' is among the strongest animals and a close friend of the lion. However, it is ultimately subjected to the lion's rules and is eventually defeated and killed because of Dimna's betrayal. While the three Bison in *The Eyes of the Impossible* have power, they depend on Johannes for support information. This creates an unequal relationship in which one party puts in more effort and is more invested. Part of the Bisons' power comes from Johannes's observations, surveillance, and reporting. The three Bison protect the park and its animals while the role of Johannes is to inform the three Bison if there are any changes in the park, or problems such as the attempt of "the Parks People to cut a new path across the width of the park" and consequently having more people to visit the park, which influences the situation and "upset the balance" of the Equilibrium (Eggers, 2023,18). For Johannes, his freedom of movement and exploration stand in contrast to his duty to inform and to regulate. This dichotomy embodies the conflict between personal liberty and the societal obligations that stem from it. His role illustrates how individual agency can

influence and be influenced by the power structures in place. The Bison's power is based on their wisdom and ability to oversee the park's balance. However, their power is not absolute, as they depend on Johannes's accurate reporting to make informed decisions. The story highlights the importance of collaboration between Johannes and the Bison to build a strong sense of power. Their combined efforts to maintain the park's balance highlight how power can be distributed and shared among different roles to achieve a common goal, echoing Arendt's concept of power that resides in action. While *Kalila and Dimna* emphasize the importance of consultation and involving others in exercising power and achieving justice, *The Eyes of the Impossible* focuses on collaboration and role division as key to wielding power effectively for peace and balance.

*The Eyes of the Impossible* examines the effects of disrupting established power dynamics. If Johannes fails in his role or if the Bison makes poor decisions, the park's balance is threatened, highlighting the interconnectedness of power and harmony. The image of a power struggle arising from unequal authority, despite differences in circumstances and outcomes, recurs throughout the story of "The Lion and the Bull." The lion, representing power, is deceived by his advisor, the Jackal, who rebels against authority using cunning methods to fulfill his dream of being the king's closest friend. This social conflict appears in both stories but is portrayed differently, as Johannes is not Machiavellian but simply a flawed character. Eggers' stories use these dynamics to explore themes of power, responsibility, and the interconnected roles needed to maintain harmony. In Eggers' narrative, power dynamics lack an ideal or balanced relationship between the Bison and the dog. The dog seems to exercise control via surveillance, functioning as an 'Eye' to uphold balance. However, he is also anxious about being watched by his boss, the three Bison, because he has not completed his mission as demanded. The Bison symbolizes the demander who constantly seeks more information and updates about the park, while the dog is the 'withdrawer' who avoids the Bison. Furthermore, the dog occasionally feels embarrassed or anxious about not being able to share the latest news or provide accurate reports. This fear often leads to unresolved trauma and creates what Foucault describes as 'internalized norms' as Johannes accepts and enforces these social rules and expectations on himself, even when they cause harm or limitations. Although the three Bison are portrayed as authoritative figures and the park's Keepers, appearing brighter than the Bull in *Kalila and Dimna*, they are still seen as dependent, needing support. While roles and responsibilities seem evenly shared between the Bison and the dog, the story highlights the need for more balance and harmony in their relationship — especially at the end, when the Bison admit their weakness and inability to carry out the plan and escape the park along with Johannes and his friends, stating they are not "adventurers" (Eggers, 2023, 232), not young or eager enough to die for change. This tension, indicative of social conflict, reflects an unequal distribution of power consistent with Dahrendorf's concept.

*The Eyes and the Impossible* uses Johannes's arrest as a lens to examine power dynamics. It illustrates the difficulty faced by individuals who challenge societal norms and highlights the extent to which authorities will go to retain control and suppress dissent. Johannes's arrest in the city park is a crucial scene that exposes numerous themes connected to power and society. It underscores the dynamics of authority between individuals and the state. Johannes's intellectual and perceptive skills offer a small opportunity and hope for sharing authority to address the problem, but human power remains dominant. The reactions of the park's men to Johannes's arrest reflect their attitude toward his presence and abilities. The arrest functions both as a physical act and as a reaction to Johannes's threat to social order, particularly the disclosure that a wild dog is neither leashed nor confined. Unintentionally, he challenges social customs and the expectations of park visitors. Johannes's arrest powerfully mirrors issues of power relations, social pressure to conform, and the harsh measures used to stigmatize anything deemed threatening or abnormal. The park, as a specific spatial setting, emphasizes the contradiction between the idealism of freedom and the reality of control exercised by social and institutional authorities.

Power imbalances in relationships, resulting from the exercise of power and institutional control, can lead to insecurity, fear, conflict, and injustice. The authors of both selected texts craft stories in which their characters embody heroes who question freedom and seek balance among participants in an environment where tasks are shared, and chores are divided equally. The pursuit of balance and harmony is symbolized through genuine friendship and cooperation. The story of "The Ringed Dove" in *Kalila and Dimna* exemplifies the power of friendship, as the Dove, the Mouse, the Crow, the Turtle, and the Gazelle work together to foster true companionship. This narrative centers on the Dove's entrapment along with her friends and how her close friend, the Mouse, rescues them. When the Dove and her friends are caught in a hunter's net, she urges them to cooperate by carrying the net together to free themselves. Although they initially free themselves from the trap, their wings remain entangled. The Dove now recalls her friend, the Mouse, who is in the city and can assist in their rescue. They work together, flying off with the still-attached net. Following the Mouse's lead, they rise as one and escape the hunter. They later visit a mouse friend, who gnaws through the net and frees them all. Through cooperation, the Dove and her friends can fly and flit. The Mouse frequently appears as a clever, resourceful, and helpful protagonist. His sincerity, loyalty, and kindness earn him the Crow's admiration, who insists on being his friend and learns from him. When the Mouse recounts her story to her friends, she describes how a greedy man treated her and how she is changing her environment, with her friends appreciating her courage. This fable demonstrates the value of kindness and cooperation, emphasizing that no act of goodness is too small — even the tiniest creature can make a significant difference. When the Gazelle, often depicted as being pursued by predators and known for her cunning and agility,

falls into a hole, the Mouse is the only one able to enter and free her quickly. The Mouse's role emphasizes quick thinking and overcoming challenges through intelligence and resourcefulness. This story from *Kalila and Dimna* highlights the importance of cooperation and mutual support among friends to maintain power and balance in relationships. It aligns with Arendt's view of power, which is rooted in action and collaboration in a shared effort. The interactions among the Dove, the Mouse, the Gazelle, the Crow, and the Turtle, grounded in trust, honesty, and mutual support, foster harmony and balance—even though the Crow is portrayed as a passive or neutral figure in the group, serving to alert others to danger or warn against suspicious characters or situations. This story underscores that effective, cooperative relationships are fundamental to harmony and decisive leadership.

The recurring image of mutual aid and empathy among species throughout the animal kingdom also appears in many moments in *The Eyes and the Impossible*. The mission to save Johannes from the police is a complex fight to protect individuality, resist unwarranted authority, and uphold empathy. It reflects larger themes of challenging the status quo, both societal and internalized norms, and learning from those with different experiences and beliefs, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding those who expand human knowledge. On one hand, the mission to rescue Johannes emphasizes the theme of breaking free from institutional control—the authority and order that regulate the animals' lives in the park—and opposes unjust and oppressive systems. Johannes's imprisonment and the attempt to free him symbolize resistance to power and the pursuit of freedom and justice. Conversely, rescuing Johannes also stresses empathy and compassion. His unique characteristics evoke sympathy and a moral obligation in those who want to help him. It is his friends who step in to assist, motivated by friendship and appreciation for his distinctive qualities, especially since they seem to oppose authority and feel invalidated. This demonstrates how true friends will do anything to support one another during tough times. The efforts of the birds, Bertrand and Yolanda, to rescue Johannes by "flap[ping] their wings" (Eggers, 2023, 58) to stop the thief's truck, along with Sonja the squirrel, who causes chaos in the van, exemplify their collective support and cooperation—different personalities, initially with varying intentions or views, unite behind Johannes. This thief, who enters the park at night to steal artworks from the museum, represents a breakdown of trust and safety in the park compared to park workers, or what Johannes calls "keepers of Equilibrium", who represent authority and control. This teamwork illustrates that healthy relationships and balanced power rely on collaboration and mutual support. It underscores that friendship is rooted in shared history and sticking together through difficult moments. The struggle and success of Johannes's rescue show that, at times, challenges are easier to overcome with teamwork. The community effort to save him highlights the strength of collaboration and strong community bonds in overcoming obstacles that might seem insurmountable for an individual. The novel's message is that strong and caring friendships help people face and survive traumatic events, emphasizing the need for loyalty and kindness during crises. Although institutional authority, hierarchy, roles, rules, and punishment dominate in the park, teamwork and cooperation can challenge authority and its regulations.

The concept of freedom, its opportunities and constraints, also appears as a recurring theme in many of the fables in *Kalila and Dimna*. However, the stories primarily emphasize ethical principles and practical lessons. Here is another way *Kalila and Dimna* express their view of freedom. The animals in the stories are sometimes placed in restricted situations, where outside forces seem to limit them and take away their freedom. In the story of "The Lion and the Mouse," the mouse frees the lion from a trap in a quest for freedom, fulfilling a promise to help. Some stories explore the idea of freedom by showing what happens when desires or actions are left unchecked. *Kalila and Dimna*'s depiction of freedom is linked to responsibility, limitations, trust, and ethics. This collection shows that the concept of freedom requires balancing within the context of social roles and thoughtful decisions. The stories suggest that while achieving freedom is an ideal goal for everyone, it can have side effects or sacrifices if there are no fair and logical rules to guide it. The stories highlight that although freedom is an ideal for all beings, it can lead to unintended consequences or sacrifices if not managed fairly and with reason.

In *The Eyes and the Impossible* by Dave Eggers, the quest for freedom is a central theme that drives the story and shapes the characters' experiences. Johannes's intelligence and distinctive viewpoint enable him to recognize the constraints imposed by society. The internalized norms and social expectations that he adopts and upholds act as barriers to his pursuit of freedom and efforts to leave the park. His quest reflects a more profound longing for independence and self-expression. Johannes's arrest and society's reactions to his behavior highlight the conflict between individual freedom and societal restrictions. The authorities and societal norms see Johannes's uniqueness as a threat, leading to his arrest. This reaction symbolizes the fight against oppressive structures that try to control or suppress those who challenge traditional norms. Johannes's journey, whether wandering into the park or deciding and planning with his friends to escape, illustrates the battle against societal forces that seek to limit freedom. His attempts to avoid capture and his friends' efforts to rescue him are acts of resistance and rebellion against oppressive systems that demand compliance with certain norms. The story depicts the ongoing struggle for freedom against forces that try to limit individuality and self-expression. Johannes's quest for freedom is also a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. As he faces challenges and works toward liberation, he learns more about himself and his place in the world. This personal transformation is a key part of the quest for freedom, showing that pursuing independence involves not only external battles but also internal growth and self-awareness.

## Conclusion

This study highlights Eggers' examination of human nature and power dynamics in *The Eyes of the Impossible*. The narrative employs several fable conventions—such as allegory, anthropomorphism, and the conveyance of moral lessons or the illumination of societal and personal issues—which are integral to Eggers' approach to fable storytelling. Through intertextual analysis and comparative methodology, this research investigates the use of fable tropes in both Eggers' *The Eye of the Impossible* and the classic fable *Kalila and Dimna*. Eggers' work serves as an allegory for social conflict, positing institutional control and authority as central causes. Drawing from *Kalila and Dimna*, *The Eye of the Impossible* integrates motifs such as the Bull character, the exploration of power dynamics, narratives of rescuing companions, and themes centered on achieving balance and freedom through friendship, trust, role allocation, and consultation. Notably, Eggers broadens the concept of power beyond traditional authority and dominance, encompassing forms such as surveillance, habitus, and acts aimed at attaining freedom, balance, and harmony. By reinterpreting issues of power, social conflict, and authority within the context of the animal kingdom for contemporary audiences, Eggers employs diverse mechanisms of power. Furthermore, he extends the scope of the fable genre to address modern contexts, moving beyond straightforward moral instruction. Instead, his narrative encourages critical reflection on society, power structures, and justice, thereby promoting a nuanced comprehension of human nature and humanity.

Eggers' *The Eyes of the Impossible* draws on the traditions of *Kalila and Dimna*, employing familiar voices, figures, and stylistic techniques to invoke the original text's impact while simultaneously offering a contemporary analysis of human behavior. Eggers incorporates plot elements and characters such as The Bull, Dimna, and others, yet presents them with irony and reversal, positioning the protagonist's journey as a reflection of psychological principles and the ramifications of individual decisions. The novel critically engages with the structures of power within human societies, providing a framework for analyzing and criticizing social, political, and economic systems and accentuating the role of individual agency in driving change. While exploring universal themes and integrating traditional fable conventions, the novel reinterprets these elements within a modern context, resonating with Kristeva's concept that all texts are fundamentally intertextual. Eggers transforms the three Bison into the lion and the Bull from *Kalila and Dimna*, utilizing them to symbolize heightened authority within the park. This authority, however, is nuanced and reinforced by Johannes, the assistant, who represents the park's Eye and pursues autonomy and independence, echoing the dynamic of mutual support between the lion king and his advisor through their interplay of counsel and sovereign power. Both works demonstrate that authority operates most effectively when its dual aspects function in tandem, though each text employs distinct modalities of power to emphasize different objectives.

Eggers' narrative leverages fable motifs to illustrate that achieving equilibrated power extends beyond equality and dialogue; it necessitates individual liberty and expansive thinking. While the novel is situated within the tradition of children's literature and fable, it offers a sophisticated examination of power relations, situating them in a modern framework and linking them to broader questions of justice and harmony. Ultimately, Eggers' work serves as a conduit for interrogating societal structures and notions of justice, inviting readers to develop a deeper understanding of human nature.

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