

## Narrating the Nation and its Other: The Emergence of Palestine in the Postcolonial Arabic Novel

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### ABSTRACT

*The Palestinian novel is one of the most neglected, if not totally ignored, genres in postcolonial and postmodern narrative fiction. As a resistant narrative, this literary form aims at creating ‘a nation in words’ and constructing ‘a country in books’ since it has disappeared from maps. There are many Palestinian novelists, both males and females, who are struggling for existence in a world totally hostile to them and to their nation. However, it is Ghassan Kanafani (1939-72) who first gave voice to the voiceless and silent people of Palestine. He wrote many novels in which his sole aim was to narrate his nation. This paper evaluates ‘Men in the Sun’ as a “national” Palestinian form which aims to represent the Palestinian “nation”. Taking Anderson (1991) and Bhabha (1990)’s theoretical assumptions about the historical relationship between the nation and the novel into account, we would argue that ‘Men in the Sun’ represents a Palestinian dream of giving expression to the national longing for a form. Edward Said ‘s theory about resistance literature is crucial in this context. The discussion concludes by considering the novel as an example of a narrative of resistance.*

*Key words: Zionism; displacement; resistance; historiography; Palestine*

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of the nation as an imagined community is at the center of the relationship between nation and narration in the context of the postcolonial Arabic novel in general and in the Palestinian novel in particular. This centrality of the concept of nation springs from the fact that the Palestinian people were not permitted to tell their story and to narrate the reality of their nation to the world. The Israeli master-narrative denied them the “permission to narrate” to use Edward Said’s phrase. According to such narrative, **the Palestinian people** do not exist at all. Golda Meir, the former Zionist Prime Minister (1969-1974) was reported in *The Sunday Times* as saying:

There was no such thing as Palestinians. When were there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.

Furthermore, she declared in one of her speeches that “the Palestinians did not exist historically, had no communal identity and no national rights” (Bayoumi & Robin, 2000, p. 249). The Palestinians according to the Zionist media do not exist. The land of Palestine was

unpopulated before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This Jewish myth was transformed into a Zionist slogan. Israel Zangwill, a fanatic Zionist, promoted the motto in the late 1800s that Palestine was “a land without people for a people without land” (Said, 1979, p. 9). This Zionist myth has become the justification for the occupation of Palestine.

To respond to the Zionist myth of negating the Palestinians and their belonging to Palestine, one should seek the help of history rather than historiography. Many historians, Arabs and non-Arabs, state that three peoples played a major role in the history of Palestine: the Canaanites, the Philistines and the Jews. The modern day Palestinians are the descendants of the Canaanites who were the first known residents of Palestine. They are believed to have settled around 3000 B.C. The Jews came later around 1900 B.C. (Saleh, 2005, p. 19). In narrating the story of their coming to Palestine, “the Torah” (Old Testament), called the area, “the land of Canaan”, admitting the existence of a civilization of this land prior to the coming of the Jews (in Saleh 2005, p.19). This historical account disclaims the Zionist’s claim that the Jews are the indigenous people of Palestine and that the land belongs only to them. The Muslims ruled Palestine for more than 1200 years, which was only interrupted by the crusades. During their rule of Palestine, the Muslims did not deny the existence of the Jewish community or any other minority in Palestine. Rather Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in complete peace and harmony. Furthermore, they did not confiscate the land of other communities or displaced them, as the contemporary settlers of Palestine, the Israelis, are doing. From its inception, Zionism attempted to legitimize the occupation of Palestine and to rewrite the history of the land from its own perspective. Due to the limitation of scope and space, we will just respond to the Zionist’s claim that the land was unpopulated and that it belongs to them. Both Ghada Karmi and Edward Said disclaim and reject the Zionists’ version of the story about who is native to the land? And whose land is it? In the introduction to her book *Married to another Man*, Karmi states that:

When the Zionists resolved in 1897 to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, they were aware that it was already home to an indigenous non-Jewish population. How to create and maintain a state for another people in a land already inhabited? Squaring that circle has been the essence of Israel’s dilemma ever since its establishment and the cause of the Palestinian tragedy that it led to.” (p.1)

The question Karmi (2007) raises in the above quotation has been answered by Benny Morris, in an interview with the Israeli daily, *Haaretz*,:

A Jewish state would not have come into being without the uprooting of [the] Palestinians. Therefore it was necessary to uproot them. There was no choice but to expel that population. If the desire to establish a Jewish state here is legitimate, there was no other choice. (Karmi, 2007, p.2).

Edward Said has also resisted such Zionist’s myth in his book *The Question of Palestine* in which he refers to what he calls “the plain and irreducible core of the Palestinian experience for the last hundreds of years” (7). According to Said:

on the land called Palestine there existed as a huge majority for hundreds of years a largely pastoral, a nevertheless socially, culturally, politically, economically identifiable people whose language and religion were (for a huge majority) Arabic

and Islam, respectively. This people—or, if one wishes to deny them any modern conception of themselves as a people, this group of people—identified itself with the land it tilled and lived on” (p.7).

In their longing for a national form to resist such a Zionist myth and to articulate the existence of their nation, Palestinian writers have opted for the novel to be their voice in their national struggle for their land, identity and freedom. Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian novelist, perhaps was the first writer who has dedicated his pen and life for the cause of his country and his people. Kanafani had great faith in the need to narrate the story of his nation to resist the Zionists’ constant efforts to eradicate Palestine from the global map and to erase the Palestinians from the international community. He has created a close relationship between the word and the world. In his oeuvre, he manipulates the language to create a land, a nation and thereby to carve a niche for him and his people in a hostile world. His novel, *Men in the Sun*, which will be discussed in this paper, belongs to and is an example of a literary trend known as resistance literature. Literature of resistance as a literary term owes much of its development to Ghassan Kanafani, as Barbara Harlow points out in her book *Resistance Literature* (1987). The term enjoys a crucial importance in the field of postcolonial studies. Like Harlow, Ashcroft (2001) connected the term to its first usage in the Palestinian literature of the sixties when Kanafani produced three volumes of this type of literature which he called the literature of *muqawamah* ‘resistance’. (p.28)

Central to understanding the themes of this narrative is the disaster of 1948 which is regarded as a focal point in modern Arab history. According to Said (2000, p.183), “the 1948 for the Palestinians is remembered as the year of nakbah, or catastrophe, when 750,000 of us were living there”. The characters who populate the narrative space of this novel are just some of these 750,000 victims of this national catastrophe. This number forms between 77 to 83 percent of the Palestinians who lived in that part of Palestine that later became known as Israel. These people have been turned into refugees (Sadi’ 2002, p.175).

### NARRATING THE NATION IN *MEN IN THE SUN*

Homi Bhabha (1990)’s concept of the nation is pertinent to our understanding of the thematic structure of the novel under discussion. Many critics have attempted to define the ‘nation’ and to explain its connotations. For Bhabha the nation is an idea that doesn’t inhere in place, or even in “tradition, people, the reason of state, high culture” (p.3). Rather it is a kind of narrative form with “textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, subtexts and figurative stratagems”(p.2). Hence, Bhabha considers the nation as a range of social and literary narratives that can be encountered as they are written and narrated in such literary genres as the novel. He states that:

In proposing this cultural construction of nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation ... I am attempting to formulate in this essay ...the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’ and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives” (p.292).

Following Benedict Anderson’s argument that a nation is first and foremost an “imagined community” and “Anderson’s view of the space and time of the modern nation as embodied

in the narrative culture of the realist novel” (p.3), Bhabha suggests that nations themselves are forms of narrations. Based on both Anderson and Bhabha’s theoretical assumptions, we will argue that the space and time of the modern Palestinian nation is embodied in the narrative culture of Kanafani’s narrative fiction. Then, we will argue that Kanafani’s intention behind writing such narrative is to construct a site of literary resistance. Viewed from this perspective, *Men in the Sun* (henceforth *Men*) can be regarded as a literary form that belongs to what Bhabha terms “counter-narrative”.

Said (1993) points out in his book *Culture and Imperialism* that the imperial powers used the novel as a cultural form that helps in enhancing the colonizer’s ideologies, references, attitudes and experiences. Stories, according to Said, “are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; *they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identities and the existence of their own history*” (added emphasis xiii). Writing in a parallel way, Ben Okri (1997), the Nigerian poet and novelist, in his collection of critical essays, *A Way of Being Free*, about the significant roles stories play in asserting or negating people’s existence, argues that: “stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves, and you change the individuals and nations” (p.112).

The power to narrate, to echo Said’s words, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very crucial in the Palestinian context. The Palestinian narrative, since the *nakbah* till the appearance of Kanafani’s fiction, has been blocked. Palestine is after all, no ordinary place as suggested by Said. It has been the site of conflicts and attacks all through history. Said (2004) points out: “It is steeped in all the known histories and traditions of monotheism, and has seen conquerors and civilizations of every stripe come and go” (p.viii). In the twentieth century, Palestine becomes “a site of an unremitting conflict between the indigenous Arab inhabitants and an incoming political movement of Zionist Jews”, who conquered the land and tragically dispossessed its people. Said states that: “every Palestinian today, is therefore in the unusual position of knowing that there once was a Palestine and yet seeing that place with a new name, people, and identity that deny Palestine altogether” (p.viii).

Before we proceed, it will be helpful to sketch a brief summary of the novel. Written in 1961, and set in 1958, the narrative relates the story of three exiled Palestinians who are trying to reach Kuwait with the aid of a smuggler. Unable to afford the money demanded by the professional Iraqi smuggler; they search for another one who agrees to take them for less money. The smuggler, Abul Khaizuran, turns out to be a Palestinian driver of a lorry who travels frequently between Iraq and Kuwait. Directed by the driver during their journey under the searing sun of August, the three men have to go inside the tank of the lorry twice to avoid the border guards. This trick goes well at first and five minutes pass like ages inside the burning oven-like tank till they cross the Iraqi border. However, at the second checkpoint, the guards delay the driver for a while chatting and joking with him about trivial issues, and the three men die of suffocation inside the closed tank of the lorry. The driver, who is now afraid of the police, throws them in a garbage dump after stripping them of their valuable belongings, asking them “Why didn’t you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn’t you say anything? Why didn’t you bang the sides of the tank? Why? Why? Why?” (Kanafani, 1972, p.79)

This brief synopsis does not adequately convey the real strength of the narrative and its symbolic and poetic textures. The narrative structure of the novel consists of seven parts each with a different title. The first three chapters are entitled after the three main characters, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan. The other four parts are symbolic: the Deal, the Road, the Sun and

the Shade, and the Grave. The setting, the people, land, the desert, borderlines, the oppressor and certain critical events (the *nakbah*) collaborate to narrate the Palestinian-ness of the land and its inhabitants.

### PALESTINIAN MEN NARRATE THE SUNDERING OF THEIR NATION

The narrative opens with Abu Qais in Shatt al-arab, an Iraqi port near Basra looking for a way to be smuggled into Kuwait, where “a man can collect money in the twinkling of an eye” (p.32). Abu Qais is an old man who witnessed the war and is subjected to its disastrous effects on his village, land and the country as a whole. Kanafani introduces us to a displaced and dispossessed character who, like many others, is engaged in an ordeal to build or re-build a wretched present out of a stable past. The use of narrative technique here is remarkable in its ability to acquaint us with the background of this exile. Memory plays a significant role in shaping this character’s sense of identity as a Palestinian.

Abu Qais from the very outset recalls that he used to have “ten olive trees with twisted trunks that brought down olives and goodness every spring” (p.26). However, “In the last ten years [he] has done nothing but wait” (p.26). Like thousands of Palestinians, Abu Qais has lost everything: his olive trees, his house and his village. Now, in order to feed the hungry mouths of his family members, Abu Qais has no other choice but to leave to seek a new beginning somewhere else. He has to experience the humiliation of being a stranger in a foreign land. This is the story of the Palestinian society in the aftermath of *nakbah*.

Kanafani has used many images and symbols to reinforce his thematic treatment of narrating his nation such as the olive tree which stands as a symbol invoking Palestine and the Palestinian identity. Many literary critics have commented on the significance of this symbol and its importance to the literary representation and therefore the subject of enunciation of the Palestinian nation. Barbara Parmenter in her book *Giving Voices to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (1994), remarks that the olive trees have been used symbolically in the Palestinian literature to represent the Palestinian nationalism and identity. Nasser Abufarha (2008) in his article, “Land of Symbols: Cactus, Poppies, Orange and Olive Trees in Palestine” comments on the pivotal role this symbol plays in asserting the Palestinian nationality. He says that:

In [Palestine] the olive tree was already emerging as a symbol of nationalism and attachment to the land. Olive trees are a prominent feature of the mountainous region of the landscape in the West Bank ... Palestinians draw connections between their ancient presence in Palestine and that of the ancient olive tree rooted in the land of Palestine. (p.353)

The presence of this symbol in the narrative and its existence in the memory of Abu Qais has a thematic function with regards to the creation of the Palestinian imagined community.

In fact, the quest to create a remarkable nation, a totally new imaginary world, specifically requires that all members of society be included in a creatively participatory process. It seems that Kanafani is aware of such a strategy. His characterizing three men who belong to three different age-groups with their own families and their hopes, dreams as well as frustrations aims at representing a new Palestinian nation ‘coming into being’ to use Bhabha’s phrase. Unlike Abu Qais (the old man), Assad and Marwan can be taken as narrative constructs that stand for the present and future of the Palestinian nation respectively.

Assad's conception of identity is totally different from that of Abu Qais. This young man belongs to the second generation of the Palestinians who were born and grew up in the refugee camps after the nakbah and the subsequent rise of Israel. He did not experience the stability and peace of mind Abu Qais had prior to his being uprooted in 1948. There is no yearning for a place or home in his mind. His career as a young man is characterized by exile, from being a refugee in Ramallah (a city in Palestine) to "a plotter against the [Hashemite] state in Jordan" (Men, 1972, p.30).

Unlike Abu Qais, Assad has no history for he is not bound by any commitment towards family, home, land or whatever. He despises anything that connects him to his past in Palestine. During the harsh journey in the heart of the desert, he damns his uncle who gave him the money for his trip. He considers his uncle's plan to marry him to his daughter Nada, as a direct affront to his personal desires.

On the other hand, Assad's resentment over the prospect of marrying Nada can be taken on symbolic grounds to be a rejection of his Palestinian identity which undergoes tragic transformations. This interpretation can be supported by the fact that in the Palestinian literature a woman is a symbol for the land of Palestine. This metaphor of the woman as Palestine is employed by Palestinian writers. Both male and female writers employ the trope of the woman as their homeland from poets, to short story writers to novelists. Amal Amireh in her article "Between complicity and subversion: Body politics in Palestinian National Narrative" suggests that even a wedding can be taken as a central trope in the national narrative. She states that "Palestine is the bride, and the groom is the Palestinian fighter/martyr." (p.751). For this wedding to be complete, the man must possess the woman but in case this man rejects the woman due to a physical or physiological scar, he is not worthy of the woman. She is at liberty to find another suitor.

In fact, Assad's lack of roots and attachment is of course indicative and significant for the role he plays regarding the relationship between nation and narration. The narrative tells us that he does not believe in morals or values. Money for him is the source of stability and comfort; "it is the key to his future" (Men, 1972, p. 29). In this way, he echoes another character of Abdul Rahman Munif in his novel, *The Trench*. In this novel, one of the central characters, Subhi tells his son Ghawazan that "A homeland is not just a land, or people; a homeland in my experience is money. The place where a man prospers, he settles because when one is rich, he is strong, and his homeland is wherever he is" (quoted in McLarney 2004, p.132). The imaginary world of this character is structured on the bases of money and business. There is no room left in his personality for morals or values. Such interpretation is supported by the fact that an important chapter of the narrative is entitled 'The Deal'. Words such as 'money', 'cash', 'price', and 'Dinars' (The official currency of many Arab countries including Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait) have a thematic function. It is then evident when the driver of the lorry tells them, while bargaining, about how much it costs and how they will get there. The narrative tells us that Abul Khaizuran went on shouting "I will swear to you on my honour" (p.50). Assad, immediately, resents this idea saying "Leave the subject of honour for another time. Things go better when a man doesn't swear by his honour" (p.50). Such words as 'honour', 'morals' and 'values' are hollow and have no appeal to Assad. This is a direct impact of the occupation that attempts to contaminate peoples' manners and systems of values. Here Kanafani proposes a narrative of the nation that is motivated by displacement and hardship.

The third man in the sun, Marwan, is the youngest among his companions. His character is significant in relation to Kanafani's task of narrating the nation. He is a committed character

who is marked by a serious sense of responsibility towards his family there in Palestine. Unlike both Abu Qais and Assad, his memory is not filled by traumatic experiences of betrayal and loss. His sense of responsibility is stated in his intention to support his mother and to provide for the needs of his siblings Mayy, Salma, and Hassan and thereby to compensate for his father's and brother's abdication of responsibility towards him and the family. In this determination, we can see the completeness and integrity of his personal and social identity. His mind is obsessed with the idea that "He would send every penny he earns to his mother and overwhelm her and his brothers and sisters with gifts till he made the mud hut into a paradise on earth" (Men, 1972, p. 45). By this intention, Marwan has identified himself as one of those thousands of Palestinians who are forced to seek a livelihood somewhere else in the world, to support those who cling to the land, to take care of it, to resist being demolished and above all to fight for freedom, for honour and for identity.

The narrative process reaches a gloomy point with the appearance of the fourth man in the sun. Abul Khaizuran, who emerges as the guide and leader of the three Palestinians during their journey towards the unknown, is more than just a fictional character. As a performative figure of the narrative, Abul Khaizuran belongs to the first generation of the Palestinians, those who witnessed the war and were subjected to its brutalities. Thus, memory is a central element in constructing his character. Through a series of flashbacks we come to know that he is impotent, a eunuch who was subjected to castration surgery while defending his country.

Now...ten years had passed since that horrible scene. Ten years had passed since they took his manhood from him, and he had lived that humiliation day after day and hour after hour. He had swallowed it with his pride and examined it every moment of those ten years. For ten years, he had been trying to accept the situation. But what a situation? To confess quite simply that he has lost his manhood while fighting for his country? What good had it done? He had lost his manhood and his country, and damn everything in this bloody world (Men, 1972, p.53).

Having suffered such great losses, Abul Khaizuran reaches a point of despair beyond which there is no hope to regain his patriotism and sense of belonging.

#### PALESTINIAN WOMEN: NARRATING THE NATION VIA BODY-LAND ASSOCIATION

Kanafani so far places men at the centre of his process of narrating the nation which is reductive but somehow representative. On the one hand, this narrative strategy can be viewed as natural in such a patriarchal society as the Arabic one. In this traditional society Palestinian women, like their counterparts in other parts of the Arab world, were situated at the very margin of the community where they remained silent, passive and subjugated to the dominant males. Their only assigned function is to marry, give birth and take care of the household.

Roger Allen has described the traditional role of women being depicted in the modern Arabic fiction to be basically related to marriage. Allen states that: "The traditional perspective of that predominantly male society has been that the primary aspiration of its female members is marriage [...]". The image and the portrayal of the female in fiction is based on the institution of marriage"; writers have cast, to borrow Allen's words, "a most critical eye on the institution of marriage—its precedents, rituals and consequences" and that:

The depiction of the sequence from young girl, to adolescent woman, to wife, to mother, has continued to provide the short story writer with a plethora of opportunities for the exploration of the conventions that govern the lives of women in the Arab world (Tijani, p.30).

This kind of literary representation fits in and is applicable to the Palestinian context where there used to be a total lack of any other representation than the role of a family member. Almost all the women characters mentioned in this narrative assume the role of a relative such as the wife, the mother, the sister and the daughter. The reason behind such a typically traditional role is representative since these are the roles the Palestinian women assumed before and up to the *nakbah*.

However, in the present time such critical views are often contested and even challenged in the modern Arabic national narratives in general and in the Palestinian one in particular. In this particular context, women exchange position from the periphery to the centre of the narrative. Amal Amireh (2003) has questioned the “deliberate” ignorance of the gendered interpretations of women and their bodies and the relationship between them and the narratives of nationalism. According to Amireh’s point of view any significant discussions of men and women characters in such national narratives cannot be taken for what they teach us about actual Palestinian men and women. Rather, they can be taken “more for what they reveal about national discourse that uses women as fictional constructs and ideological signs” (p.748).

In considering Kanafani’s narrative through such critical lens, we can find that there is an obvious gendered reproduction of the national Palestinian story in the aftermath of the *nakbah*. The image of the woman as “mother-land” and “nation” is apparent from the very outset. The narrative opens with Abu Qais as a stranger lying on earth where:

the earth began to throb under him...Every time he threw himself down with his chest to the ground he sensed that throbbing, ...And the smell, then? The smell that, when he sniffed it, surged into his head and then poured down into his veins. Every time he breathed the scent of the earth, as he lay on it, he imagined that he was sniffing his wife’s hair when she had just walked out of the bathroom, after washing with cold water. The very same smell, the smell of a woman who had washed with cold water and covered his face with her hair while it was still damp. The same throbbing (Men, 1972, p. 21).

Women characters that populate the narrative space of this novel personify the nation better than the male characters do. Take for example the character of Shafiqah who is another victim of the war and its impact on the Palestinians. The narrative tells us that Shafiqah is a crippled character “who had lost her right leg during the bombardment of Jaffa”, and that this leg “had been amputated at the top of the thigh” (p.40). The narrative suggests that Shafiqah’s body has been mutilated, and one part has been removed; just the same as the land of Palestine which has been confiscated by the Israelis. Shafiqah’s fractured body cannot be taken neutrally for it stands for the part of Palestine that was taken and given to the Zionist occupiers in what is politically known as the UN 1947 Partition resolution. **This resolution has catastrophic results** to Palestine and the Palestinians up to date. Following this resolution, Palestine “as a defined administrative entity literally ceased to exist” as Joe Cleary (2004) has mentioned in his study *Literature, Partition and the Nation-state: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (p.46). The UN project has given over 70 percent of the Palestinian territories to the Jews who



were a minority, but well-armed. The remaining portions were annexed by Egypt and Jordan respectively.

What is significant here is that Kanafani offers a gendered representation of the land where the female's fractured body has symbolically figured as the land and nation. Those who defile the land are the same predators that injured the woman and cause the amputation of her leg. Moreover, the narrative tells us that Sahfiqa "owned a three-roomed house on the edge of the town" (40). This information is very significant to the symbolic function of this woman. It implies that Shafiqa provides her "homeless" husband (the Palestinian man) with a place of security and stability, her house. She saves him the hardships of living in the refugee camps by providing him a "concrete roof". This roof, an identity, dignity and nationhood, is what the Palestinian desires to possess. Then, it is not surprising that this roof is possessed only by a woman who refused to leave the land. The male characters have left Palestine. They are portrayed as exiles that will live and die in other people's land. In this way Kanafani feminizes the land/nation and makes it an object of his national consciousness. This body-land association adds much vigour to the narrative and enhances its postcolonial aspect.

This association between the earth and the woman is very significant to narrating the nation. The image of land as a woman and the woman as a nation and mother land is never innocent and neutral. It is full of intentions and meanings, according to Bakhtin's theory of the novel. Bakhtin stipulates that nothing in fiction is innocent or arbitrary, for "all words and forms are populated by intentions," (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 1984, p.293). Bakhtin suggests that words begin as neutral, but they lose their innocence whenever the speaker "populates it [the word] with his [her] own intention, appropriates the word, adapting it to his [her] own semantic and expressive intention" (293).

Through his depiction of war victims, displaced people, orphan children born and growing up in refugee camps, and women without their men, Kanafani proposes a national narrative of loss, humiliation and exploitation. It is not the narrative of Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan, Shafiqa or Abul Khaizuran, but also the narrative of all the Palestinians. Mohammed Siddig has pointed out that "The four Palestinian characters of the novel—Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan and Abul Khaizuran—belong to four different age groups and are meant thus to provide a representative sample of the Palestinian people as a whole." (*Man is a Cause*, 1984, p.10). Radwa Ashwur, an Egyptian critic, observes that by constructing such "a living human image, pulsing with life...Kanafani constructs an image of a community [ *ummah* or nation ] and not only an image of individuals within it" (quoted in McLarney, 2004, p.148).

Finally, it is important to mention that Kanafani, by writing such fiction, deconstructs the Israeli master narrative that negates and annihilates the Palestinians. Such deconstructionist approach on the part of the writer and his text reflects a great belief in the power of narrating one's history and nation to claim and re-assert one's deprived rights in country, land, nation and above all in survival. He proposes modes of narrative that make use of many voices, images, symbols along with some highly sophisticated narrative strategies. He develops a remarkable narrativity where "he skilfully blends past and present in the consciousness of his four characters" (Men 1972, p.12), so as to enable us to discover their pains, motives, dreams and aspirations for embracing such journey. Memory here is given precedence, for through its articulations his characters translate their sense of belonging into a land and a nation into longing and belonging that takes place in the mind. Hilary Kilpatrick in her introduction to the translated version of the novel has acknowledged such mastery of blending theme and technique by Kanafani which gives it a position "among the best in Arabic literature" (p.12).

Coming back to the main assumption about categorizing this novel as a narrative of resistance, we can say that the way Kanafani has constructed his characters and themes fit remarkably in the postcolonial discursive strategies of representation. Kanafani believed that literature should respond to the ongoing state of affairs in his occupied land. He gives voice to the muted people instigating them to stand up; break the silence and thereby to let the world hear the voices which Zionist media and warfare machines think that they had ultimately silenced. If the Zionists' think that they have succeeded in wiping Palestine from the global map "temporally", Kanafani's narrative, otherwise, has succeeded in recreating it "eternally", in the minds and hearts of millions, not only Arabs but also non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims who believe that Palestine will be restored and liberated.

### CONCLUSION

Perhaps, we can say that the novel for Kanafani is more than just a literary form. It is a platform of struggle, a site of resistance, so to speak, and a midwife to the creation of the nation. Kanafani, like Aldous Huxley, the English critic and novelist, believes that "nations are to a very large extent invented by their poets and novelists" (Texts and Pretexts, 1959, p.50). Kanafani himself is not just a writer or a novelist; he is a political activist who has coined the term (*adab al-muqawamah*) translated as literature of resistance. Prior to his assassination at the hands of the Mossad agents, he produced three volumes of this type of literature in addition to many novels and short stories which in their totality stand as a counter-narrative in which he responds to and calls for the re-entry of the Palestinian nation into the realm of postmodern history after systematic and methodical Zionist efforts to negate and wipe it out of history and the global map altogether. His novel, *Men in the Sun*, is a powerful contribution to the corpus of literature that aimed at rewriting the Palestinian nation not only in modern contemporary postcolonial Arabic literature, but also it helps to carve the name of Palestine and the Palestinians into the hearts and minds of many freedom fighters and supporters of the Palestinian cause all over the world via the English version of the text.

As one critic has suggested, each novel must tell a story. The story here is not important *per se* in that it gives an enjoyment and pleasure to the reader. Rather, its significance lies in the fact that it narrates a nation. It is an afflicted and uprooted nation. For many years, there was a complete silence, but this silence is broken by Kanafani whose antagonist towards the end of his story keeps shouting "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you say anything? Why didn't you bang the sides of the tank? Why? Why? Why?" (Men, 1972, p.74). The implications of this final question by Abul Khaizuran might provide a relief to Bhabha's sense of regret that he expresses at the end of his introduction to *Nation and Narration*, for not including the voices of those who "have not yet found their nations: amongst them the Palestinians." Their voices, Bhabha (1990) says, 'remind us of important questions: When did we become "a people"? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one?' (p.7).

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