

The Dialectics of ‘Home’ in Ghassan Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*

Mohammed Lami S. A. Shamallakh^a

p100405@siswa.ukm.edu.my

Center for Research in Language and Linguistics,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Ravichandran Vengadasamy^b

ravicv@ukm.edu.my

Center for Research in Language and Linguistics,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Mohamed Zain Sulaiman

zain@ukm.edu.my

Center for Research in Language and Linguistics,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Since the Palestinian *Nakba* in 1948, the definition of home in diasporic Palestinian literature has become a central issue among literary scholars. However, this concept of home has been addressed mainly from a mono-dimensional perspective, that is, either the concrete attachment or the abstract affiliation of home. Based on the significance of the interplay of both dimensions and the lack of focus on the duality of home in previous studies of Palestinian literature, this paper explores the abstract and concrete dimensions of ‘home’ as depicted in the novel *Men in the Sun* written by Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian diasporic writer. This study investigates the paradoxes of home for Palestinians in the aftermath of the Palestinian *Nakba*, with a special focus on Kanafani’s perception of home. The study adopts Georg Hegel’s dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis in the discussion of the abstract and concrete perceptions of home. Our findings disclose that Kanafani projects the many spaces that the refugees seek shelter in, such as the refugee camp, as the antithesis of home and that they are attached to poverty, humiliation, and death. Not only does Kanafani deny any mediating solutions for home, but he also assures us that such mediating solutions, other than the original home, will lead to additional aggravation to the original problem of displacement. Therefore, the synthesis of home, in both its concrete and abstract dimensions, remains as Palestine. It is hoped that this paper will pave the way to a better understanding of the concept of a Palestinian home.

Keywords: Ghassan Kanafani; *Men in the Sun*; Hegelian dialectics; home; Palestinian diaspora

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant changes to the political landscape of the Arab world, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, was the division of this geographical area into 22 separate states. The separation was not based on national, ethnic or racial factors but on European colonial projects that started before World War I. The segregation and separation resulted in the development of different Arab sub-cultures and, by extension, literatures such as Egyptian literature and Iraqi literature. While it is relatively easy to define Egyptian or Iraqi literature as literature written by Egyptian or Iraqi authors, defining Palestinian literature becomes rather problematic, particularly after the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe) which witnessed the large-

^a Main author

^b Corresponding author

scale displacement of Palestinian Arabs during the 1948 Palestinian war. The problem of defining Palestinian literature stems from the question of who or what qualifies as Palestinian, and whether such an intellectual and literary production could be classified as Palestinian. This, of course, is due also to the definition of the geographical entity called 'Palestine' which remains problematic.

Prior to the *Nakba*, Palestinian literature was defined as the literary production of the inhabitants of that geographical entity called Palestine (Elad-buskila, 1999). The *Nakba* resulted in the distortion of the previously defined home of these inhabitants, particularly those who went into diaspora. Consequently, the definition of home in diasporic Palestinian literature became a central issue among literary scholars (Al Areqi, 2014; Aljahdali, 2014; Alghaberi, 2018). For example, Mahmoud Darwish's poetry is described as a continuous search for home and as an attempt to portray an idealized image about home (Al Areqi, 2014). Susan Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin* is depicted as a story of returning home and the uncovering of historical and geographical transformation imposed on their home, Palestine (Aljahdali, 2014). Randa Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home* is characterized as one which views Palestinians as global citizens and that the ideal Palestinian is one who remains faithful to the idea of Palestine as homeland (Alghaberi, 2018). These examples illustrate that the notion of home is a contentious one for literary scholars.

A particular literary work which has attracted the attention of literary scholars discussing the notion of the Palestinian home, and which this study will be expanding on, is the novel *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani (1962). Suleiman et al. (2012) analyzed the theme 'home' in *Men in the Sun* from a gender perspective. and found that masculinity represents the lost home, while femininity represents the stable and fixed home. The novel depicts the *Nakba* as the aftermath of men's failure and homeland Palestine as a woman who has not abandoned Palestinians and is still waiting for their return. In another study, Eid (2014) points out that in *Men in the Sun*, men are seeking individualistic, selfish solutions for their problems and instead of heading back home, they go in the opposite direction away from home in an attempt to search for financial stability. This 'wrong way' away from home eventually leads to death. Waleed & Muhaidat (2017) investigated the theme 'home' and its dynamics in influencing identity formation and achievement. They found that *Men in the Sun* depicts the act of fleeing home to find peace elsewhere. Accordingly, such a defeatist act leads to a miserable, uncertain and unstable life, where refugees remain silenced and marginalized.

While literary works such as the ones above stress the importance of the concept of 'home' in diasporic Palestinian literature, they tend to address the concept from a mono-dimensional perspective, that is, either on the concrete dimension of home, such as its physical geographical space (e.g., Aljahdali, 2014; Eid, 2014; Waleed & Muhaidat, 2017) or the abstract dimension, such as the affective attachment and connection formed between people and places (e.g., Suleiman et al., 2012). A bi-dimensional perspective of home in diasporic Palestinian literature has yet to be brought to the limelight of scholarly attention. The need to conceptualize home that is comprised of abstract and concrete dimensions stems from Ashcroft's et al. (2007) idea that displacing people from their original homes results in major changes in identity and that the physical dislocation from a concrete home has its projections on other abstracted perceptions of a home.

Therefore, this study departs from previous scholarly work mentioned above in the way home is investigated and focuses on a bi-dimensional (abstract and concrete) understanding of home in diasporic Palestinian literature. This study would contribute towards a better understanding of the perception of home among the Palestinian diaspora. In order to be able to process the idea of home as abstract and concrete, the foundations of such conceptualization are to be traced in previous related literature as discussed in the following section.

THE ABSTRACTNESS AND CONCRETENESS OF HOME

Home is usually referred to as a place of dwelling where people live and to which they belong. It is “the area and place where you live, a place with its surroundings that you normally take affection to and have a very special relationship to” (Brink, 1995, p. 22). The concrete dimension of home corresponds to the basic physical need of a safe and protective shelter. Such a need is basically satisfied by a ‘house’, or by a ‘country’ or ‘land’ in the context of this study. Home as a physical concrete space is an important tool to initiate one’s social interaction with his/her surroundings; even homeless people find a physical place to occupy, consequently, inhabitants of this physical place create a relationship with it (Fox, 2012).

The relationship between the self and the space is also the key to the abstract dimension of home which extends beyond the physical space and structure of a dwelling to a more psychological, social and emotional dimension. Murrani (2019) states that the loss of home is not only material and physical, but also conceptual and nostalgic. It is the affective attachment and connection that is formed between human beings and place (Pallasmaa, 1995). It is the dimension that describes the psychological, social and emotional relationship between human beings and place. Menard et al. (2018) and Ferrari & Roster (2018) argue that the affective connection between individuals and a place is a central factor in the attainment of psychological stability and health. This relationship is often associated with family life, calmness, safety, refuge, understanding, and sympathy (Hareven, 1991; Moore, 2000).

To this end, it can be said that a complete conceptualization of home would be one that is bi-dimensional, encompassing both the concrete (physical) and the abstract (intangible). The concrete dimension functions to serve materialistic basic needs for man as shelter, safety and protection, but it does not nurture an emotional attachment between the man and the house. What shifts a place from being just a house to home is the affective attachment and connections that are formed between man and place. In order to have connections between man and his place of dwelling; thus, making it home, another dimension has to be applied; an unmeasured abstracted dimension. This abstract dimension makes the connection between man and house, thus elevating the house to the wider notion of home. The abstract dimension of home can be traced through the social network man creates around his home, in addition to the psychological intimacy and attachment to the place.

Nevertheless, the idea of home for Palestinians, the focus of this study, is rather problematic, due to the complexity of the definition of Palestine as a physical geographical space. The bi-dimensional conceptualization of home, that is based on the concrete and the abstract dimension, remained in the shadow when researching the meaning of home in the Palestinian literature in general and in Kanafani’s novels. In this paper, we hope to shed light on what constitutes home for Ghassan Kanafani, and the various levels of concreteness and abstractness of home in Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*.

THE SELECTED WORK: KANAFANI’S *MEN IN THE SUN*

Men in the Sun is selected for the study on the basis that it is a diasporic Palestinian literary work, in which the home theme is strongly emphasized. The significance of the novel is further enhanced by two factors; the first being that it is the first Palestinian novel to be published after the Nakba, and the second is that the novel posited a position that was contrary to the movement of the Palestinian diaspora in the post 1948 context. Al-Buji (2006) asserts that after Nakba there was a prevailing scene of silence and a bitter feeling of defeat and misery. Palestinians, after 1948 and before 1968, were fleeing forward (away from Palestine) by abandoning the miserable refugee camps and moving to other countries in search of financial stability. This forward fleeing would have been critical for the survival of the cause of regaining the lost homeland. *Men in the Sun* serves as a crucial reminder, an awakening of sorts to the Palestinian

diaspora. Kanafani's depiction of the tragic deaths of the three main characters in the novel attests to this (Abuazm, 2015; Al-Buji, 2006). Additionally, the prominence and circulation of the novel which has been translated into multiple languages and for various readership markets cannot be ignored.

Kanafani, belongs to the Palestinian libertarians who witnessed and experienced the Nakba since its early moments. He was born in the Palestinian Acre city in 1936 and was assassinated in 1973 in Beirut. He is known for coining the term literature of resistance and his affiliation to the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLOP). Kanafani was an accomplished author, producing several novels, short stories, and political news articles while living in Lebanon. Continuous movement across different places is a common trait in his work. The events in *Men in the Sun*, take place in several regions, some resonating with Kanafani's own memories of travel to various places, including from Palestine before 1948, his displacement after the *Nakba*, life in refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon, moving to Kuwait for work, and finally coming back to Lebanon. This continuous movement and mobility reflect an attempt to find a stable space that one could eventually identify as home.

Men in the Sun tells the story of three Palestinian refugees who travel from the refugee camps in the West Bank to Kuwait where they hope to find work. The three men arrange their illegal passage to Kuwait with the help of a smuggler in Iraq. During the course of the novel, the three men are treated badly and constantly humiliated. The three men are forced to ride in the back of a truck to cross the desert between Iraq and Kuwait. While on the truck, the smuggler made them hide in an empty water tank to pass checkpoints. After passing the last checkpoint, the smuggler opens the empty water tank to find all three of them dead. The smuggler then throws the bodies in a waste dump.

In the next section, we explain the theoretical framework that underlies the analysis of *Men in the Sun*. Bearing in mind that Kanafani was a diasporic writer, the literary works he produced are also considered diasporic. The fact of being diasporic in itself is the opposite and a negation of being at home if one considers the condition that the diaspora has already been displaced from the original home (Cohen, 2008). In other words, investigating home within a diasporic context is the investigation of an idea within its opposing context. Therefore, we feel that the employment of Georg Hegel's philosophy of dialectics is most apt for the current study. Hegel's dialectical philosophy flows in a triangulated manner that takes into account the contradiction and paradoxes of the course of history.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHOD

HEGEL'S DIALECTICAL APPROACH

Georg W.F. Hegel, is one of the well-known philosophers of the 19th century during the Enlightenment Age. According to Beiser (2005) and Baldwin & Preti (2011) Hegel is best known for his way of thinking and inquiry. His philosophical approach is called the dialectic approach. Baldwin and Preti (2011) assert that Hegel, in his philosophy of dialectics, constructs his ideas and arguments around the contradiction and the oppositions of differing sides and/or ideas. Hegel, argues that opposing sides with its contradiction and its negations evoke the movement towards change. This evoked movement is considered the main source of action that boosts improvement, change and progress. In this context, Hegel delivers an optimistic view for contradictions whereby the negative establishes the fundamental dialectical element.

According to Hegel's dialectical method, the triangulated relationship moves between thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Schnitker & Emmons, 2013). The thesis is the initial starting point, then this thesis is opposed, negated and/or contradicted by its opposite, the antithesis. The continuing opposition between thesis and antithesis is synchronized into the synthesis.

Hegel's dialectical method implies self-evoked movement where the initial and basic ideas, notion and/or actions (thesis) stimulate its essential limitation. At this stage, when such limitations are uncovered it becomes inevitable to have the opposing negation (antithesis). The debate and clash continue to be in process between the thesis and antithesis until such a conflict reaches a common ground that consolidates the former two opposing ideas. This stage is called the synthesis. The Hegelian dialectical philosophy is an attempt to clarify the progress of mankind towards a better condition (Mueller, 1958; Popper, 2004). By using the three main ideas of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, Hegel highlights the paradox of consciousness. Magee (2010) states that man demands knowledge for the absolute truth, however man cannot think without drawing differences and contradictions. Every idea or notion holds the true being of this idea (thesis), and at the same time brings with it opposing or contradicting idea (antithesis).

In other words, the dialectical method carries with it the fact that the process of historical movement is mainly the result of continuous conflict. Accordingly, Hegel's thoughts can be broken down into categories: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Based on that, Hegel in his presented philosophical approach implies that history incorporates the idea that the struggle between opposites is a clash between the actual world and the potential world (Mueller, 1958; Popper, 2004; Magee 2010).

Furthermore, it can be said here that the flow of this triangulated relation when applied in real life means that when an idea is presented as a positive concept it represents the thesis. This idea or concept keeps interacting until it produces the opposing idea (antithesis); an idea or concept that negates the thesis. This opposing and negating idea, antithesis, works to develop another idea which is the synthesis. At the stage of synthesis, the two initial ideas thesis and antithesis are unified and bonded together (Fritzman, 2014).

Regardless of the structured pattern that Hegel's dialectical approach follows, there are some cases where this pattern might not fit into this triangulated relationship. Findlay (2014) declared that this Hegelian trend can take forms other than the triangulated structure of 'thesis', 'antithesis' and 'synthesis.' Findlay proceeds by saying that the antithesis can take different forms and levels; thus, the antithesis is no longer a single stage between the thesis and the synthesis. The antithesis by itself can take multiple stages. Accordingly, the whole Hegelian process is pushed from just a three-stage process into a four or five-stage process. Findlay, goes further in his anatomy for Hegel's dialectical approach, by denying the mediating role of the synthesis, as it occurs after the conflict between the thesis and antithesis: "the reconciling functions of the third member are not at all obvious" (p. 73). What is supposed to happen is that during the conflict and interaction between the thesis and antithesis, the two are supposed to reach an in-between level, thus, the synthesis appears as a reconciliation between the two earlier stages. However, what might happen is that a common ground or a reconciliation between the thesis and the antithesis might not be reached; thus, the third stage in the Hegelian trend, the synthesis, is not reached.

Based on the above discussion, the current paper adopts Hegel's dialectical approach to investigate the presence of the triangulated relationship of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis in Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun*. As highlighted earlier, one of the main issues that is depicted in this novel is the search for home. Logically speaking, if someone is searching for something, then this means that he/she does not have it. Thus, for Kanafani, the search for home implies the loss of home, meaning that one is not able to reside in one's own homeland. This feature of not being at home, and the act of searching for home hold the bases of the first two stages of Hegel's approach, which are the thesis and the antithesis. The manner in which the thesis and antithesis interact will result in the final stage, the synthesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial presentation of the three main characters in the novel, the physical concrete antithesis is clearly depicted. The author, while presenting his characters, stresses the fact that Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan are living in a refugee camp. Having the three main characters dwelling in a refugee camp implies (a) that they are refugees and not indigent in the land they are dwelling, and (b) their physical uprooting from their home in Palestine.

Abu Qais rested on the damp ground, and the earth began to throb under him with tired heartbeats, which trembled through the grains of sand and penetrated the cells of his body. Every time he threw himself down with his chest to the ground he sensed that throb-bing, as though the heart of the earth had been pushing its difficult way towards the light from the utmost depths of hell, ever since the first time he had lain there.
(Kanafani, 1999, p. 23)

In the opening scene of the novel, as depicted in the above excerpt, the action of laying a heart to the land by Abu Qais, and the associated sensations of feeling his heart beats and the earth's trembling as if it were corresponding to his heart beats show how Abu Qais is attempting to create contact with his physical self, and the land he had come into. This move to create such a contact can be seen as an attempt to initiate an abstracted relationship with the land.

As mentioned earlier, home holds two dimensions: the concrete dimension that is limited to the meaning of house and another dimension which is the abstract dimension. This abstract dimension is associated with a social, psychological and emotional bond between man and house. The abstract dimension of home is what completes the concept of home and expands it from the limitation of being simply a house. Therefore, home includes both the concrete physical dimension that provides physical shelter and the abstract emotional, psychological and social dimension that provides belonging, safety and emotional stability (Moore, 2000; Rapoport, 1995, 2005; Robinson, 2014). In short, the excerpt above describes Abu Qais' attempt to compensate for his feeling of alienation in the new land.

The following excerpt shows how this attempt by Abu Qais is likely to fail: "It's the sound of your own heart. You can hear it when you lay your chest close to the ground" (Kanafani, 1999, p. 23). This sudden realisation was an awakening alarm for Abu Qais. Though Abu Qais was trying to develop a physical feeling of his heartbeats and fusing it with the earth to produce a spiritual and psychological (abstract) connection with the land, the sheer physical nature of this act takes the character back into real life. This means that the abstracted dimension with the land could not be attained. Thus, the abstract dimension of home could not be developed and the process of home making collapses. This notion of taking Abu Qais back to reality and the collapse of the home making process is evident when:

He turned himself over and lay on his back, cradling his head in his hand... It was blazing white, and there was one black bird circling high up, alone and aimless. He did not know why, but he was suddenly filled with a bitter feeling of be-ing a stranger, and for a moment he thought he was on the point of weeping.
(Kanafani, 1999, pp. 23–24)

In the excerpt above, the depiction of the solitary black bird that was flying alone and aimlessly above Abu Qais reminds him of the situation that he was in, that is, homeless and alienated in a strange land. Kanafani also mirrors the lack of this abstract dimension of home in Abu Qais' feelings of alienation as shown in the following excerpt:

More than at any time in the past he felt alien and insignificant. Rubbing his hand over his rough chin, he brushed from his head all the thoughts that had gathered like teeming hosts of ants.
(Kanafani, 1999, p. 25)

The excerpt above illustrates the troubling thoughts that Abu Qais was having as it dawns on him that the possibility of attaining a psychological contentment, which is the abstract quality of home that he was seeking, was becoming more and more remote.

To gain a clearer picture of the situation Abu Qais was in, UNHCR's definition of refugees and refugee camps is referred here. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in its web page (<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>) defines a refugee as a person who is forced out of their country due to "persecution, war or violence". Moreover, The UNHCR states that "A refugee camp is a temporary settlement built to receive refugees and people... Refugee camps usually accommodate displaced people who have fled their home country... Usually refugees seek asylum after they've escaped war in their home countries..." Given the UNHCR's definitions of refugees and refugee camps, in addition to the scholarly conceptualization of home, it could be said that the state of being a refugee is in direct opposition to the concept of home. From the physical concrete view point, home is usually a permanent and stable place while a refugee camp is temporary. Home is also usually associated with ownership but a refugee could never own a refugee camp. Paradoxically, both home and refugee camps share the physical aspect of providing shelter; but the shelter a refugee camp provides is associated with instability, mobility, alienation and fear. Therefore, the refugee camp is presented as the antithesis of home.

The feeling associated with losing your home is not limited to the sense of alienation alone. As long as the abstract dimension of home holds social and psychological stability, the antithesis of being in exile holds the opposite. The antithesis of the abstract dimension of home implies social and psychological instability as well. In this context and as Suleiman et al. (2012) pointed out, women and land represent honour; thus, losing your land is equivalent to losing your honour. This means that the loss of honour and dignity can be added to the antithesis of home. Kanafani highlighted this idea of being humiliated more than once in the novel. Such a feeling of humiliation is also apparent when Abu Qais remembers Ustaz Salim, a teacher at his town in Palestine, who died one night before Abu Qais' town fell into the hands of the Zionist gangs:

God was certainly good to you Men he made you die one night before the wretched village fell into the hands of the Jews... You saved yourself humiliation and wretchedness, and you preserved your old age from shame. The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim". (Kanafani, 1999, pp. 23–24)

Moreover, being a refugee means that the physical bond and connection with home is broken. This fact indicates a physical loss of the ownership of the concrete space. In the case of Abu Qais, he lost his property and olive tree farm and was given a small miserable space by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) to dwell in. The current new status of Abu Qais resulted in severe financial deterioration for him. Before 1948, Abu Qais used to work on his farm and grow olive trees to generate income for him and his family but after 1948 he lost everything. The physical disconnection from home directly negates the associated feelings of safety, security and belonging. Such abstract dimensions of home are then replaced with the feelings of alienation and exile. The negated feelings are highlighted in the novel by the constant reference to Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan as refugees. The following excerpt condenses much of such feelings, that is, the feeling of loss of the concrete and abstract senses of home, and the sense of helplessness and insecurity that envelopes a person when one is in a state of abject poverty and a homeless refugee:

In the last ten years you have done nothing but wait. You have needed ten big hungry years to be convinced that you have lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole village... What do

you think you were waiting for? Wealth to come through the roof of your house? Your house? It is not your house. (Kanafani, 1999, p. 28)

Early in the novel, Kanafani foreshadows his idea that a mediation, reconciliation or in this case, Hegel's 'synthesis', cannot be attained. Based on the dialectical approach, this means that the synthesis as a mediator between the thesis and antithesis is unreachable. The fact that Abu Qais was a Palestinian refugee who was uprooted from his homeland, Palestine, in 1948 during the Palestinian *Nakba*, and then forced to live as a refugee in a refugee camp, presents the antithesis of home. Kanafani then puts forward the idea that finding a solution, to solve the dilemma of Palestine, through the reconciliation of the thesis 'home' and the antithesis of 'the refugee camp' or 'living in exile' is not feasible.

Moreover, not only does Kanafani's narrative in *Men in the Sun* breaks down Hegel's triangulated dialectical approach, but the writer also dedicates additional focus for consequences of the voluntary form of diaspora. In Hegel's dialectics, the synthesis between the thesis of 'home' and the antithesis of 'refugee camp' could take place if the diaspora starts to mediate his displacement by accepting the new space, which is through adapting to the new land and assimilating its ways. However, Kanafani denies such a mediation between the thesis (being at home) and the antithesis (being in exile or being displaced) by highlighting the fact that leading a diasporic life, especially the voluntary diasporic life, only results in alienation and rejection, not acceptance or assimilation.

The move towards a voluntary diasporic life becomes apparent in the actions of the three main characters in the novel, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan when they, instead of starting a collective attempt of resistance to regain their land, become totally disconnected from their surroundings and start to seek personal, individual and selfish solutions for their misery (Eid 2014). Eid's viewpoint might look quite judgmental, but in order to understand the idea that Eid was trying to convey about the characters in *Men in The Sun*, we need to understand the historical context of the period of that time. Before the Gulf War in 1991, and since the 1950s, Kuwait was the best place for Palestinians to go to. It was the financial privileges provided for foreign labour that granted Kuwait this reputation among Palestinians. It is true that the human aspiration for a better and financially stable life is a legitimate one. However, Kanafani's concern seems to be about the sacrifices that need to be made in regaining the home, or homeland, that was lost. For Kanafani, the need to secure a financially stable life in another land was perceived as individualistic and perhaps even selfish. The notion of home being equated to the homeland or land of birth has been studied by Almutairi et al. (2017) who state that land and home remain inseparable in the minds of young Palestinians.

Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan shared the same hope of seeking financial stability and prosperity to compensate for their status as refugees. If they had indeed managed to realise that hope in the new land, that could be seen as a synthesis between the thesis 'home' and the antithesis 'refugee camp'. However, such a synthesis does not happen. Nor do Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan head westward toward Palestine, the original home. Instead, they attempt to journey eastward towards Kuwait. The three men work their way to Basra, Iraq from Jordan without any travel documents. While in Iraq, they try and fail to convince a professional but greedy Iraqi smuggler to get them across the Kuwaiti border. A Palestinian water-tank truck driver, Abul Khaizuran, then agrees to smuggle them into Kuwait by hiding them in his empty water-tank while he uses his travel document to get through the border security. By doing this, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan create an additional level of displacement to the existing state of diaspora which in turn represents an additional aggravated form of the antithesis of home. The water-tank space in which the three men hide during their travel toward Kuwait then represents a new space that can be equated to the antithesis of home as it is described as suffocating and extremely uncomfortable. After making it through the Iraqi checkpoint without

any problems, the truck driver is detained by the Kuwaiti officials at the border entry. The long delay at the Kuwaiti checkpoint ultimately results in the tragic death of the three men as they suffocate in the airtight water-tank. Abul Khaizuran makes the shocking find after he is cleared by the Kuwaiti officials:

The body was cold and still. Stretching out his hand, he felt his way to the back of the tank. The other body was still holding on to the metal support. He tried to find the head but could only feel the wet shoulders; then he made out the head, bowed on the chest. When his hand touched the face, it fell into a mouth open as wide as it could go...
(Kanafani, 1999, p. 72)

Shocked by their senseless deaths, Abul Khaizuran nevertheless proceeds to remove their valuables and money and disposes of their bodies at a Kuwaiti garbage dump. The shocking end to the journey of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan appears to underscore Kanafani's message that there are no mediating solutions to the loss of home.

A point worth noting is that Kanafani's narrative does align with the dialectal approach of reading the text. Upon the deaths of the three men, Kanafani no longer refers to them by their names again. Thereafter, Kanafani refers to them as 'the body' and 'it' as depicted in the excerpt above (Kanafani, p.72). What we see here is the diminishing of humanistic features of the three characters. In addition, the description of the body as 'cold' and 'still' is a direct contradiction (antithesis) with the general setting of the fiery heat of the desert. Adding the description 'cold' in reference to the three men's bodies is an elaboration of the loss of a central feature of being human and of home, which is 'warmth.' Warmth of a home can be seen in both its two dimensions of the abstract and the concrete. Regarding the concrete dimension, home can be seen as providing the warmth that is necessary to shield the person from the cold weather. Additionally, in the abstract dimension of home, warmth is usually associated with the rhetorical expressions that come from honest and intimate feelings that are exchanged at home. The lack of warmth or the coldness of the corpses highlights the additional feature projected by Kanafani on the antithesis of home, that is, the loss of living humans.

CONCLUSION

To recap the discussion so far, *Men in the Sun* presents the antithesis of home in its bidimensional forms of the concrete and the abstract as experienced by Palestinian diaspora, namely the characters of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan. Beginning with the refugee camp, where most of the events start, Kanafani posits it as the immediate antithesis of home by detailing the concrete and abstract features of the camp which are in stark contrast to the thesis of home in Palestine. The refugee camp, as depicted in this novel, completely envelops the three men with feelings of instability, loss and alienation. Following Hegel's dialectical method, the antithesis of home, the refugee camp, completely negates the experience of the concrete and abstract home, as the men remember it. So how does the synthesis play out? In the novel's sequence of events, the three men journey to Iraq in a bid to escape to Kuwait in search of a more stable life for themselves and their families. At first glance, that course of action would seem to be the mediating solution by which the synthesis reconciles the negation of home by its antithesis, the refugee camp. However, Kanafani does not present a synthesis of the thesis and antithesis. Instead, the antithesis of home is expanded to include the desert and the smuggler's shop in Basra, Iraq, and ultimately the suffocating confined space of the water-tank mounted on a truck that was supposed to take them to Kuwait. The death of the three men in *Men in the Sun* not only prevented the synthesis from developing, but it annihilates any further existence of the thesis and the antithesis.

From a dialectical approach, by not providing any kind of synthesis, Kanafani soundly negates any compensatory solutions to the search of a home outside of Palestine. According to

Kanafani, a homeless life leads to a graveless death. For Kanafani, home in its bidimensional form can only be found in the original place of ‘historical Palestine.’ Through his narrative *Men in the Sun*, Kanafani holds the Palestinians in diaspora responsible for the liberation of the homeland. In his opinion, if every displaced Palestinian started to run after a prosperous life while the homeland is occupied, who then will bear the cost of liberation? It is perhaps worth mentioning that Kanafani himself left Kuwait and moved to Lebanon to join the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLOP).

It is hoped that this paper will further contribute to and promote a better understanding of the concept of a Palestinian home. Such an understanding takes into consideration the contradictions, paradoxes and (im)possible reconciliations which are relevant to the recent crisis of May 2021 that is witnessing an escalation of violence against the Palestinian people.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mohammed Lami S. A. Shamallakh (moh.shampal@gmail.com)

Currently a PHD candidate in the Postcolonial Literature in English Programme in UKM (in 5th semester). Has 12 years of experience in humanitarian aid and relief. Part time lecturer in English literature. Research interests include History of the Zionist Movement, Islamic and Jewish theology, Palestinian diasporic literature and Postcolonial literature. An observer member of the Palestinian Writers Union.

Ravichandran Vengadasamy (PhD) (ravicv@ukm.edu.my)

Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He is currently the Head of Programme for Masters by Coursework and the Coordinator of the Postcolonial Literature in English Programme at the faculty. His research and teaching interests include stylistics, Malaysian literature in English, postcolonial literature and academic writing.

Mohamed Zain Sulaiman (PhD) (zain@ukm.edu.my)

Senior Lecturer of Translation and Interpreting at the Research Centre for Language and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and a professional translator and interpreter for English, Arabic and Malay. Recently published a volume on *Translation and Tourism: Strategies for Effective Cross-Cultural Promotion* (2019, co-authored with Rita Wilson).