

Unveiling Palestinian Identity through Imagined Community Perspective in Kanafani's Works

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Abstract

Ghassan Kanafani, widely recognised as a trailblazer in the realm of Palestinian resistance literature, has garnered significant attention and undergone extensive scrutiny through various readings and studies. This paper examines the literary contributions of Kanafani from the perspective of Palestinian identity, with a specific focus on the historical context of the Nakba. The theoretical framework employed in this study is Benedict Anderson's concept of national identity. This study uses the character analysis method to examine the development of Palestinian identity in the main characters of Kanafani's novel *Return to Haifa*. To examine the progressive development of individuals' self-awareness of within the narrative, uncovering the impact of trauma resulting from the Nakba on both individual and collective identities, specifically via the lens of traumatic collective memory. This analysis underscores the novel's portrayal of Palestinian resistance literature, emphasizing on the political strife and the profound sense of national identity experienced by the Palestinian populace. In light of the aforementioned context, the finding reveals that the character Khalid embodies the qualities of resilience and forward thinking throughout Palestinian society. This portrayal contributes to the formation of a collective Palestinian identity, referred to as a "imagined community," which seeks to unite Palestinians residing in diverse geographical locations. The study aims to shed light on the significance of Palestinian resistance literature in cultivating a resilient sense of identity within the ongoing pursuit of Palestinian self-determination.

Keywords: Palestine Resistance Literature, Collective Memory, National Identity, Ghassan Kanafani, Return To Haifa

Introduction

Resistance tales are a subject of interest in the realm of literature, particularly in terms of their presentation and articulation. Additionally, there is a focus on how literature depicting these experiences may effectively fulfil societal and national expectations in terms of its presentation. Resistance literature can be understood as a genre of literary works that actively opposes war, oppression, and aggression. It serves as a means of expressing resistance, encompassing both individual and social forms, which emerge in response to the

experiences of oppression, humiliation, injustice, and tyranny endured by a nation under attack (Long Yaling, 2020). In the realm of Arabic literature, the term "resistance literature" pertains to literary works that delve into the intricacies of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with a particular focus on the topic of Palestine. This literary discourse gained prominence, particularly in the aftermath of the "Palestine Catastrophe" which is Nakba that occurred in 1948. During the 1960s, there was a notable surge of interest in resistance literature within the Arab literary community (Man Zijuan, 2020). Esteemed Arab writers began to explore the realm of resistance literature, with particular emphasis placed on its significance in colonised Arab nations. The inception of Palestinian resistance literature can be historically situated in the 1860s, during which it gained prominence as a significant facet of Arabic literature. The term of "resistance literature" was considered formally introduced by the release of Ghassan Kanafani's book entitled *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948–1966* (Allaham, 2009). Thus, Resistance literature refers to the body of literary works created by Palestinian writers during the period of occupation that commenced in 1948. According to Ghassan Kanafani (1982), the works of these Palestinian writers living under occupation can be seen as significant examples of literature that embodies resistance. These writings are characterised by their deliberate, realistic, and powerful traits, which demonstrate both continuity and profound depth. The present study employs the notion of a "catastrophic event" as delineated in its separate definitions. And aims to examine the "Nakba" as a designated "catastrophic event" within the context of Palestinian resistance literature. To gain insights into the development of Palestinian national identity, with a specific focus on analysing the literary works of Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani as the primary textual corpus.

The novel *Return to Haifa* tells the narrative of a Palestinian couple, Sayeed and his wife Safiyyah, who were escorted by British colonial troops to Haifa harbour in April 1948 and asked to board an unknown boat set to depart for nowhere when their five-month-old son Khaldun was left behind at home. Subsequently, The Jewish Agency discovered the infant after brokering a deal with an elderly Jewish childless couple, Ephrat and Miriam Koshen, who were moving from Poland to Palestine. This elderly couple would occupy the home where the baby was discovered. Khaldun was given to the Koshens at the request of the Jewish Agency; they adopted him and renamed him Dov. Later, In the aftermath of the Six-Day War between the Arabs and Israel in 1967, the remaining portion of Palestine was lost, and the Israeli occupation authorities instituted an open-bridge policy with the newly captured Palestinian areas and Jordan. Sayeed and Safiyyah travelled back to Haifa twenty years later to check on their "child" and home. Upon their arrival they found that the house remained mostly unchanged, even the three peacock feathers in the vase. Sayeed and Safiyyah were expecting their son Khaldun to arrive in the evening when they saw Dov, a twenty-year-old stranger who had just returned from a military training exercise wearing an IDF uniform.

The debate between the four protagonists regarding a variety of topics, including parental and filial ties, identity, and nation, was fruitless due to the defensive justifications they made to defend the experiences they had experienced. In the end of the story, Sayeed wished to return to Ramallah, wishing that his younger son, Khaled, had joined Palestinian resistance movement against the Zionist occupation of all of Palestine. However, after this meet, Dov/Khaldun can no longer pretend; his words reveal a defensive stance, whereas his semiotic behaviour, crumbled upon himself, reflects the pain of the truth and his inability to

settle since; his identity is indeterminate between Israel/Palestine, Zionists/Palestinians, Colonizers/Colonized, Judaism/Islam... He brilliantly illustrates how intricate the question of man cause is. As the Palestinians of 1948 fled their homes and surrendered their land to foreign occupation, they did little to recover it other than wait and grieve. Kanafani's self-criticism is a constructive first step in diagnosing the problem, the loss of Palestine, in order to discover effective long-term remedies to the issue. *Return to Haifa* can be regarded as the typical Kanafani style resistance literature.

The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel asserts that the Palestinian Arabs residing in Israel are recognized as the native population, the occupants of the Israeli state, and a crucial element of the Palestinian People, in addition to being part of the Arab, Muslim, and wider human Nation (Khatib, 2007). This declaration offers a succinct delineation of the extent of Palestinian identity. Between the years 1956 and 1967, an observable characteristic of the Palestinian Arab community residing in Israel has been the existence of a clearly defined and mutually held collective aspiration. The leadership of the Palestinian Arab community and the subsequent development of "resistance literature" by poets and writers played a significant role in the emergence and importance of the national stream, which had a profound influence on the Arab world in the aftermath of the 1967 war (Khatib, 2007). The analysis of Palestinian's national identity under the theoretical framework pertains to the sociocultural phenomenon wherein traumatic events experienced by individuals, such as wars, genocides, or natural disasters, are collectively constructed into a shared experience of suffering. This process serves to uphold or establish the collective identity of the group (Anderson, 2006). According to the theoretical framework proposed by Benedict Anderson (2006) regarding "national identity", the formation of a sense of national identity is shaped by historical events and the impact of the imaged communities. The formation of this identity is established through a communal subjective imagination that is collectively experienced by individuals, and is deeply influenced by their shared interactions with historical occurrences (Anderson, 2006).

Kanafani's literary production persisted throughout his lifespan and across the diverse places he resided in. His literary works can be classified as belonging to the genres of resistance literature, as evidenced by his unwavering support for the Palestinian cause (Khoury, 2013). The primary themes explored in Kanafani's fiction can be defined as resistance, exile, poverty, and oppression, all of which are closely associated with the Palestinian people and their struggle (Man Zijuan, 2020). The primary focus of this paper is to elucidate the prominent themes in Kanafani's fiction, specifically the loss of land, the displacement of Palestinians into a new state, and the resulting refugee status and impact on their identity consciousness. When examining the concept of Palestinian identity, it is crucial to consider foundational and theoretical frameworks within a historical background. History is widely regarded as the primary repository of collective identity. Nations are engaged in the process of revising their historical narratives with the aim of elucidating and accommodating present-day developments, events, and phenomena. This endeavour serves the purpose of utilising these historical accounts to address the difficulties confronting society, while also aligning with the ideological perspectives of the ruling class. Tracing the historical identity of a people is a challenging endeavour, as identity, akin to other societal elements, exhibits considerable flexibility, variability, and mobility, hence reflecting historical circumstances. The process of identity formation often occurs in a profound manner during periods of conflict

and adversity. This is because it becomes crucial, in such situations, to establish and emphasise the shared characteristics among certain groups of individuals that are relevant and can be utilised in confronting the particular challenge (Al-Jubeh, 2008). According to Benedict's (2006) theory of national identity, which has been utilised in the present study, it places significant emphasis on the notion that national identity is shaped by historical factors and the power of imagination. The shared experiences of individuals within a nation contribute to their collective understanding of historical events, which in turn shapes their subjective perception of a collective identity.

Literature Review

While many studies have discussed Palestinian identity issue and some even touch upon the character Dov's identity crisis in *Return to Haifa*, the "imaged community" related Palestinian national identity discuss under the resistance literature realm has not been the focus of many studies and academic writings so far. The study of Palestinian resistance literature dates back to 1966. As the pioneer of "Palestine resistance literature", Kanafani authored the article *Resistance Literature in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 1948-1966* in year 1966 and he elaborated the relationship between resistance literature and the Palestinian resistance movement. Additionally, academic circles interpret Palestine's resistance literature differently. For instance, Mir Salam (2013) discussed the themes of resistance in Palestinian literature. He believed that Palestinian literature mobilised the masses to resist colonial powers and appealed for national resistance (Mir, 2013). Similarly, Allaham (2009) points that the Palestine resistance literature is minority literature...that Marxist themes have been present in the struggle of the people and in the fiction as well, that realism was used in depicting the suffering of the people in Ghassan Kanafani and Arab Resistance Literature. Man Zijuan (2020), a Chinese scholar, conducted research on the origins of Kanafani and Palestinian resistance literature, as well as the development and progression of Arab resistance literature. The sources mentioned provide systematic documentation of the emergence and evolution of resistance literature. However, they omit the analysis of the construction of Palestinian's national identity after Nakba in relation to the theme of resistance literature, which is the main focus of this paper.

Furthermore, it is essential to shed light on the nature of human memory and the relationship between individual and collective memory in relation to the formation of national consciousness in social groups before delving into the discussion of the Palestinian national identity in resistance literature and its use of the Nakba as a collective historical experience in the collective Palestinian memories. Rashid Khalidi (1997) argues that the Palestinian experience and memories of exile and displacement were the primary impetus for the Palestinians to become conscious of their national and territorial identity. While Long Yaling and Ma Xiaolin (2021) give a definition on the collective of Palestinian people, they state that the experience of common suffering and collective traumatic memory based on the Nakba constitute the group uniqueness of the Palestinians/Arabs, which is different from the Arabs in other regions, and also the collective identity shared by the Palestinian/Arabs, thus marking the formation of the independent Palestinian collective.

Jayyusi (1992) posits that the subject matter of Palestinian literature is determined by various social and political issues such as the Palestinian identity, existence, chronological evolution of the society, and the unprecedented growth of Palestine "stone-throwing"

children. In addition, according to Al Hudawi (2003), the involvement of Palestinian writers in the resistance movement was focused on advancing Palestinian national identities and establishing political organizations committed to the pursuit of national liberation. In other words, the literature produced by Palestinians has been significantly influenced by the complex political, cultural, and historical circumstances of their nation. The susceptibility of Palestinian literature to the aforementioned influences is attributed to the significance of the term "resistance" in their writing. Consequently, there has been a discernible trend towards collaboration among Palestinian writers on the theme of resistance. Al Hudawi's (2003) posits that the literature of resistance centers on the struggles of the ordinary individual, portrays factual occurrences, and introduces innovative conceptual models for insurgent and governmental initiatives. Palestinian literature is considered to be a noteworthy form of resistance literature due to its foundation in reality and its portrayal of the challenges faced by a population that has experienced profound physical and spiritual detachment. The literary canon of Palestine has historically alluded to a theme of resistance, with the advent of Palestine resistance literature being closely linked to the identity crisis experienced by the Palestinian people. Palestinian writers have adopted the use of narrative as a means of resistance to draw attention to the predicament of their people.

In their article Dr. Ayman Elhallaq and Dr. Akram Habeeb (2015) examine Kanafani's novel *Return to Haifa*. They analyze Kanafani's approach to portraying the identity of the colonizer, both as a collective and individual construct through the development of characters. And also they posit that the conventional representation of the Israeli occupation is one of a violent and destructive entity, whereas Kanafani skillfully employed postcolonial discourse to depict Jewish characters as human adversaries. The crisis was expounded through a postmodern approach that employed the use of juxtaposition and parallelism. This technique enabled Kanafani to establish the demarcations between individual/collective or national/personal identities (Elhallaq & Habeeb, 2015). Also, According to Elhallaq and Habeeb (2015), the establishment of Israel on Palestinian land and the consequent displacement of Palestinians from their native towns were the result of the events that occurred in 1948. The emergence of a novel circumstance has influenced the construction of their personal and literary personas. The forced relocation of the Palestinian people and the contentious establishment of the state of Israel have given rise to a complex set of identity issues, whereby the traditional majority has been transformed into a minority, and the erstwhile minority has assumed a position of numerical dominance.

As per the statements of scholars aforementioned, there exists a literary convention that is devoted to chronicling and articulating the memories and afflictions of societal factions by means of literature. Long Yaling (2020) explores the manner in which Palestinian authors and intellectuals navigate their individual and collective obligations in the realm of resistance literature. The Palestinian people's experience of "disaster-induced suffering" has played a significant role in strengthening their collective sense of national identity. However, the literary works produced by the resistance movement can also be regarded as a manifestation of their distinctive national identity. Almarhabi (2020) asserts that the narrative of return contains an embedded discourse of nostalgia, which has instilled a sense of optimism among Palestinians residing in the diaspora regarding the prospect of returning to their homeland. According to Almarhabi (2020), the aspiration to return serves as a means for Palestinians residing in the diaspora to maintain their Palestinian national identity and avert its dissolution

due to the challenges of displacement and exile. She also asserts that in situations where the Palestinian population is compelled to leave their homeland, literary works produced by the resistance movement can function as a beacon of hope, aiding them in navigating their path and preserving their sense of national identity during their period of displacement.

Theoretical Framework and Method

The concept of imaged community, when viewed through an expansive lens, can be characterised as a collection of individuals who are not physically present or readily available, but with whom we establish a connection through the faculty of imagination (Kanno & Norton, 2003). The concept of imagined communities, as posited by Benedict Anderson (2006), suggests that nations are constructs that are not based on direct personal connections between individuals. Anderson argues that even in the case of the smallest nation, its members are unlikely to be acquainted with or have any knowledge of the majority of their fellow members. Nonetheless, each individual within the nation holds a mental image of their collective identity and shared belonging.

Therefore, in order to apply Anderson's theory of national identity, a theoretical framework of this paper is structured as depicted in the following chart:

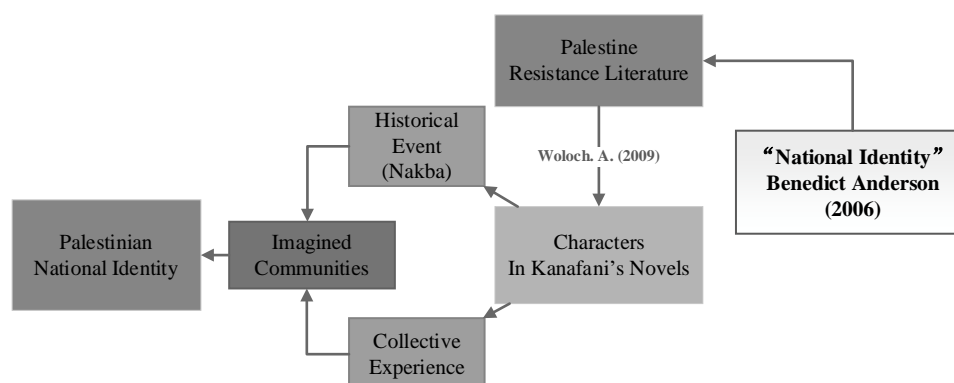


FIGURE 1.

The present study utilises character image analysis as a data analysis method, building upon the methodology introduced by Woloch. According to Woloch (2009), "character-space" refers to the narrative setting within a novel that comprises the presence and interactions of its characters. This pertains to the physical, temporal, and relational positioning of the characters within the larger narrative structure, including elements such as the backdrop, sequence of events, and engagements with other individuals. The character-system encompasses the entirety of the narrative and aligns with the integration of all character-spaces. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive examination of the primary characters portrayed in a literary work of Ghassan Kanafani. This study aims to examine the traumatic experiences endured by fictitious characters in the novel, together with the subsequent formation and evolution of their collective identity. This study lays particular emphasis on conceptualising these experiences as "imagined communities" within the theoretical framework proposed by Benedict (2006). In order to classify the individuals portrayed in the literary composition, various factors are considered, including the narrative structure which encompasses elements such as the setting, temporal characteristics, and interactions with other characters. Additionally, the characters' recollections of significant calamitous events and the ultimate repercussions they encounter are taken into account. The

study aims to assess the degree of psychological distress encountered by the characters and the underlying factors that have shaped the formation of their shared identity. It is of paramount importance to classify the textual representations associated with the concept of national identity as depicted in the literary work. In order to illuminate the development of the characters' comprehension and conception of national identity as shown in the narrative, it is crucial to do a comprehensive analysis of the key characters.

Contribution of the Study

This study enhances the discourse on Palestinian identity by providing a detailed examination of Ghassan Kanafani's works, emphasising how his characters navigate their identities in the context of displacement and cultural dislocation. The study highlights how Kanafani's narratives depict the persistent endurance of the Palestinian spirit amidst loss, oppression, and exile. The study also examines the psychological aspects of displacement, emphasising literature's influence on national identity and cultural awareness. This study aims to rectify common misconceptions regarding Palestinian realities and enhance comprehension of the extensive cultural and historical turmoil experienced by the Palestinian people, thereby contributing to the academic discourse on the nexus of literature, identity, and resistance.

Aftermath of Nakba—Who Are We?

The Palestinians experienced expulsion and dispersal following the Nakba, the Palestine catastrophe event. The novel *Return to Haifa* centres its narrative within this historical context. Said and Safiyyah were relocated to different place in a state of distress, residing and nurturing their offspring at a considerable distance from their place of origin. For the individuals in question, undertaking a voyage to their native land two decades subsequent to their expulsion also represents a quest for self-discovery and the reclamation of their identity as Palestinian individuals who were forcibly displaced. In a like vein, Khaldun and Khalid, their sons, as individuals belonging to the second generation subsequent to the catastrophic event, have been nurtured within distinct familial and societal contexts as a result of the repercussions stemming from the Nakba. Moreover, they are actively engaged in the endeavour of introspectively delving into their respective identities. Khaldun's unique upbringing environment notably contributed to his experience of an identity crisis during the process of self-certification.

Michelle Balaev (2008) discusses the correlation between trauma and identity crises. She highlights a key assertion made by contemporary literary trauma theory, which posits that trauma engenders an incapacitating fear that fractures or eradicates one's sense of self. This statement forms the foundation for a broader argument positing that identity is shaped through the intergenerational transfer of trauma. In the instance of Dov, who was an infant during the Nakba, he does neither possess personal memories of the catastrophe, nor does he share in the collective trauma experience of the calamity as described by Benedict (2006). However, it is evident that he was unquestionably influenced by the intergenerational transmission of trauma and subsequently became the indirect victim of the harrowing ordeal of Nakba. The complexity of an individual's identity is shown in the enormous influence of a traumatic experience on their inner self. According to Said, the main protagonist of the novel, Dov has developed a comprehension of his personal identity, hence inhibiting his return to the previously adopted and endorsed "Jewish" identity (Kanafani & Harlow, 2000). Dov's enrollment in the Israeli military and the consequent ramifications of his living circumstances

resulted in a decline in acceptance from his Arab biological parents. Simultaneously, it is quite unlikely that the Israeli army would fully embrace his Arab heritage. The indirect influence of Dov is evident through the interaction between the influence of his parents and the collective experience of the Palestinian people in response to the catastrophe. This stance situates the individual within the broader context of the collective Palestinian identity, encompassing not only personal recollections but also other relevant factors.

Moreover, Balaev (2008) posits that the transmission of stories from one generation to another via different textual mediums can lead to the transformation of personal trauma into a "transhistorical trauma," which subsequently shapes not only the modern individual identity but also the racial or cultural identity. Transhistorical trauma establishes a correlation between an individual and a collective, suggesting that an individual living many centuries after a group has experienced a significant trauma may undergo a similar traumatic experience if they share a common attribute with the historical group, such as race, religion, nationality, or gender. This phenomenon is attributed to the enduring, recurring, and contagious nature of traumatic experiences and memories. In contrast to Khaldun/Dov, Khalid, another son of Said and Safiyyah, exemplifies the manifestation of "transgenerational trauma". Khalid was brought up in a culturally rich Arab environment and within a family deeply rooted in Palestinian culture. This upbringing facilitated his seamless acquisition of the collective memory of the Nakba from both his parents and the wider Palestinian community.

This led to his desire to enlist in the Palestine resistance army in order to persist in the struggle for the Palestinian cause. Hence, whether individuals such as Khalid who directly experience intergenerational trauma, or individuals like Dov who indirectly inherit intergenerational trauma, the evidence substantiates that trauma from the post-Nakba era continues to impact the younger generation of Palestinian descendants within familial contexts. The novel depicts the experiences of two generations, which align with Caruth's (1991) argument. These experiences highlight the significance of memory continuity, as well as its reinforcement, repetition, and subsequent documentation, in the process of discovering and fortifying one's cultural, ethnic, or personal identity. Kanafani highlights the ineffectiveness of concealing or suppressing unresolved elements of a painful historical narrative, emphasizing that such efforts do not eliminate the trauma itself but rather perpetuate it and transmit it to subsequent generations.

In addition, the novel establishes a connection between the protagonist's existential struggle with identity and the concept of performativity. *Return to Haifa* delves into the deep influence that trauma exerts on one's identity and sense of self in a more thorough manner. Dov's identity crisis, a prominent thematic element within the text, can be seen as the most intricate and profound manifestation of his psychological distress subsequent to an abrupt alteration in his life circumstances. In the novel, Dov's gradual defeat is evident as his dialogue with Said unfolds, with Said's remarks progressively undermining Dov's certainty of his national identity. The evidence suggests that Dov's psychological defense mechanism was breached, leading to the emergence of a psychological inclination towards self-doubt. Dov's movement started from

"The young man remained by the door, shifting his gaze among the three of them, confused" to "the young man had withdrawn into himself in the chair, defeated"

and ended by

"Dov remained seated, withdrawn. His cap was resting against the vase again, and it seemed for some reason, ridiculous" (Kanafani & Harlow, 2000).

The novella well portrays Dov's perception of his own instability and fragmentation, as well as his ongoing attempt to establish a cohesive sense of self. The novella appears to imply that the protagonist's strong identification with his Jewish heritage and residency in Israel's occupied lands does not aid in resolving his posttraumatic identity dilemma. Instead, it exacerbates the individual's perception of their identity together with the internal conflicts they experience, such as their deep ambivalence regarding guilt, remain unresolved. *Return to Haifa* does not exalt the optimistic, imaginative, and rebellious possibilities of subjectivities that are constructed, adaptable, and diverse. Instead, it emphasises the unsettling and menacing consequences of identities that are precarious, divided, and fragmented. The focal point of the paper lies in the assertion made by LaCapra (2014) that trauma is an unsettling encounter that fractures one's sense of self and generates voids in one's existence. The disruption of Dov's initial Israeli identity is particularly significant within the area of resistance in Kanafani's works.

In conclusion, the paper's initial claim that traumatic experiences can lead to the division or deterioration of identity, which is transferred between generations, has been supported by the examination of how trauma is communicated within familial relationships. Furthermore, the examination of Ghassan Kanafani's literary masterpiece "Return to Haifa" in the framework of cultural trauma and identity elucidates the intricate dynamics between historical trauma, personal identity, and the performative elements of selfhood. Kanafani's depiction of the Palestinian experience, as demonstrated via the characters of Dov and Khalid, underscores the intricate nature of this intergenerational pain and their state of identity confusion following the Nakba. Dov, as an individual who has experienced trauma indirectly, experiences a profound struggle with regards to his sense of self, which is further intensified by his determination to uphold a dual identity. This finally results in a state of destabilisation and fragmentation of his personal identity. In contrast, Khalid embodies the direct transfer of transhistorical pain, deeply ingrained in the collective memory of the Palestinian people. This trauma motivates him to actively embrace and preserve his cultural identity through acts of resistance. The story highlights the enduring influence of trauma on future generations and emphasises the importance of addressing and recognising it in order to preserve cultural, ethnic, and individual identity within the familial framework. Ultimately, Kanafani's work, situated within the realm of resistance literature, accentuates the gravity of this disruption of identity and its profound consequences, ultimately emphasizing the enduring power of historical trauma in shaping the trajectory of individual and collective identities.

We are an "Imaged Community" of Palestinians

Anderson argues that the concept of nations is a sociological construct. According to Anderson (2006), the concept of the "nation" is a relatively recent development that has emerged as a result of several socio-material influences. He provided a definition of a nation as a "imagined political community," which is conceptualised as possessing inherent

limitations and sovereignty. According to Anderson (2006), a nation can be considered as an imagined community due to the fact that individuals belonging to even the most compact nation are unlikely to have personal knowledge, encounters, or awareness of the majority of their fellow members. Nevertheless, within the cognitive realm of each individual, there exists a mental construct of their collective identity and shared sense of belonging. Although it is unlikely that individuals within a community will have the opportunity to personally meet every other member, they may nevertheless have common interests or identify themselves as belonging to the same nation. Furthermore, this concept is commonly recognised as a phenomenon that pertains to the comprehension of similarity and communal identity. Moreover, it is widely regarded as a fundamental element of personal growth and self-awareness, since it facilitates the establishment of a fundamental bond with other individuals. These factors elucidate the postmodern condition experienced by various marginalised communities, wherein identity serves as a mechanism for resistance, collective mobilisation, and the establishment of distinctiveness through the interplay of conflicting narratives. The conceptual analyses, as understood by scholars, pertaining to identity will establish a basis for examining the formation of identity and the motivations underlying the establishment or revival of an identity (Guibernau, 2013).

The primary central character in *Return to Haifa* can be discerned as Said, who assumes a prominent role in the dialogues within the novel. Said serves as a conduit for Kanafani's political aspirations, which are projected onto the characters within the narrative. Additionally, Said functions as a spokesperson for the Palestinian diaspora population. As the head of this troubled family, Said bears a substantial moral responsibility due to the premature separation of his eldest child. As an individual of Palestinian descent, he harbours a strong sense of responsibility to engage in active resistance and conscientiously pursue concrete actions with the goal of recovering his ancestral homeland. The novel's narrative portrays the progression of Said's self-awareness on his identity, with a special focus on his interactions with his first son, Khaldun, who lived in his residence with his Jewish foster parents. In this analysis, the interaction between Said and Khaldun/Dov has been investigating from the perspective of heightened awareness of identity. The provided flow chart depicts the progressive evolution of Said's strengthening of identity awareness:

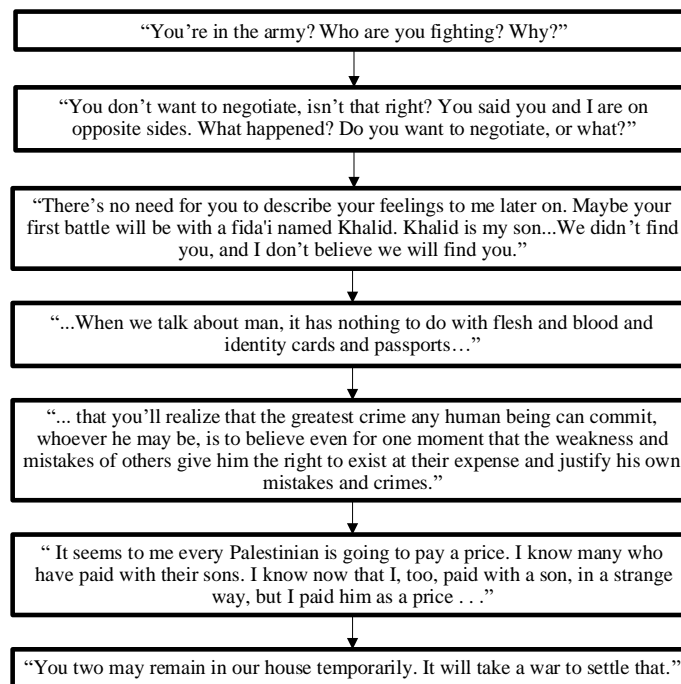


FIGURE 2.

The flow chart presented illustrates a gradual decline in Said's confidence on the potential reunion with his son, Khaldun. Throughout the continued discourse between Said and Khaldun, an emergence of Said's Palestinian national identity became apparent, despite Khaldun's biological connection to him. During the course of the dispute, the main character ultimately demonstrated the perseverance and determination of the Palestinian population in safeguarding their national identity. Concurrently, Said additionally expounded upon his viewpoint regarding the notion of "identity", asserting that

"When we talk about man, it has nothing to do with flesh and blood and identity cards and passports... But beyond that, what? Isn't a human being made up of what's injected into him hour after hour, day after day, year after year?" (Kanafani & Harlow, 2000).

According to the individual in question, human identities are formed independent of any documentary evidence, as they evolve organically over time through natural processes. Said's assertion regarding the topic of identity aligns with the concept put forth by the aforementioned scholar, Benedict (2006), who posits that national identity is influenced by historical circumstances and the potency of the imagination. The notion of identity in this context does not pertain to the delineation of geographical territories and the theory of the formation and evolution of national identity. Instead, it aligns more closely with a structuralist understanding of national identity.

Benedict Anderson (2006) posits that the process of identity creation is helped by a collective subjective imagination that is mutually shared among individuals. This imagination is firmly rooted in their collective experiences with historical events. The term of the "imagined community" corresponds with Said's understanding of "identity" as a deeply rooted sense of affiliation that has developed naturally over a prolonged period, without concrete documentation. The encounter with the Nakba event serves as an essential

prerequisite for the formulation and advancement of Benedict Anderson's theoretical framework on the notion of identity. The Palestinians who have experienced this horrific occurrence collectively form a shared memory of the catastrophe, so constructing a "imagined community" that encompasses all Palestinians who possess this collective memory of the aforementioned tragedy. Although Dov's experience of intergenerational transmission of trauma memories from the Nakba is evident, his upbringing in a distinct environment hindered his inclusion under Said's conceptualization of the "imagined community". As Said's understanding of his own identity evolved, he consciously removed Dov from his conceptualization of the "imagined community." In contrast, Khalid, the second son of Said, who was born after the Nakba, also had traumatic memories of the disaster through intergenerational trauma. Khalid was raised in an environment marked by a prominent collective identity, also known as the "imagined community". Due to the influence of his upbringing, Khalid is inclined to engage in armed conflict and advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people, so earning the esteemed reputation of being a source of eternal pride among Said's community. Kanafani's work explores the development of a robust Palestinian national identity, which is forged through the collective imagination of the community. This process ultimately results in a persistent and unwavering commitment to resistance. Resistance is a significant determinant in the shaping of Palestinian identity, and it serves as an essential pathway for the advancement and reinforcement of the Palestinian national identity.

Conclusion

Reinterpreting Ghassan Kanafani's novels and exploring the sense of national identity in them, fifty years after his martyrdom, is an act of reawakening to the Palestinian resistance literature. Under occupation, resistance poetry and literary works served as a means of disseminating information, promoting communal unity and collective action, and serving as a forum for expressing the concerns, emotions, and opinions of the Arab population. Kanafani (1982) argued that the tone of this resistance literature mirrored the evolving stages of the popular struggle, which had become the defining characteristic of the Arabs' existence in occupied territory. The Israeli Palestinian conflict has never been actively addressed and has never been on the agenda for resolution. We continue to require the strength of resistance literature and the spiritual support of novelists like Kanafani.

Return to Haifa exemplifies the Palestinian resistance literature, characterized by its robust political struggle and purposeful emphasis on the national identity of the Palestinian populace. Simultaneously, this genre of resistance literature serves as a political proclamation to its readers, as Kanafani articulates through Said's perspective,

"...I'm looking for the true Palestine, the Palestine that's more than memories, more than peacock feathers, more than a son, more than scars written by bullets on the stairs. I was just saying to myself: what's Palestine with respect to Khalid? He doesn't know the vase or the picture or the stairs or Halisa or Khaldun. And yet for him, Palestine is something worthy of a man bearing arms for, dying for. For us, for you and me, it's only a search for something buried beneath the duct of memories. And look what we found beneath that dust. Yet more dust. We were mistaken when we thought the homeland was only the past. For Khalid, the homeland is the future" (Kanafani & Harlow, 2000).

The Palestinian people have consistently maintained their commitment to resistance in response to the deportation imposed by the Israeli government and the subsequent loss of their homeland. Khalid is perceived as the future of the Palestinian community, embodying aspirations for the future and actively engaging in resistance efforts. Kanafani's literary oeuvre revolves around the theme of resistance, serving as a focal point for the exploration and elucidation of Palestinian national identity. The construction of the national identity of the Palestinian population is facilitated through the conceptualization of a "imagined community," which does not necessitate tangible documentation as a basis for its establishment. The individuals residing in the region of Palestine, those in diaspora across several nations, and those residing within the areas under Israeli occupation all share a common national identity as Palestinians.

In conclusion, the study delves into the intricacies of Palestinian national identity through an analysis of Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Return to Haifa* within the context of resistance literature. Drawing from the theoretical framework proposed by Benedict Anderson (2006), the research underscores the formation and perpetuation of national identity in the wake of traumatic experiences, referred to as the Nakba, that serve to unite individuals under a shared collective identity. The examination of characters and their experiences in the novel reveals the evolution of their sense of belonging, resistance, and collective identity, highlighting the profound impact of historical events on shaping the Palestinian identity. Kanafani's literary works emerge as both a reflection of and a contributor to the Palestinian resistance movement, embodying the aspiration for a future where the mistakes of the past are rectified through unwavering determination. The study's findings underscore the resilience of Palestinian national identity, spanning across geographical boundaries and enduring amidst adversity, as portrayed in the novel's characters and their struggles. Ultimately, Kanafani's work serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of resistance and the continued quest for a distinct Palestinian identity within the broader context of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

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