

## The Intersection of History and Personal Narrative in *I Saw Ramallah and Returning to Haifa*

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the close association between historical occurrences and individual explanations in two key texts, *I Saw Ramallah* by Mourid Barghouti and *Returning to Haifa* by Ghassan Kanafani, with an eye to show the difficulties of the postcolonial experience. By studying how these novelists re-count and associate their personal stories with some magnificent historical agenda of Palestinian displacement and identity, the present article emphasizes that personal narratives are perceived as active tools for understanding communal trauma and resilience. Employing Edward Said's theories of Orientalism and the conception of identity, the analysis discusses how personal experiences are not only anecdotal but are forcefully ingrained in the socio-political truths of colonialism and postcolonialism. The article also intends to show that the act of storytelling becomes a method for confrontation attributable to assisting the repossession of identity and memory while going through exile. Through a complete consideration of both texts, this paper discusses the implication of personal narrative as a means for relating the past with the present.

**Keywords:** Collective Trauma, Identity, Memory, Orientalism, Postcolonial Experience, Resistance.

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between history and personal narrative is a highly influential perspective through which we can study the intricacies of identity, memory, and trauma in postcolonial situations. Two moving novels that point to this matter include Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah* (2000) and Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* (1969). Both texts demonstrate the personal facets of historical events, and illuminate how individual stories personify more vivacious socio-political realities and the shared experience of a banished country.

Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah* is about the novelist's return to his own country after years of expulsion. Barghouti tries to express the complex circumstance of the people who have been displaced from their homes and forced to suffer from the problems of identity conception in a disjointed world. His explanation is not just a re-counting of personal experiences; it is in fact a deep picture of the historical experience of Palestinian exile as a result of seizing the discomfort of loss, reminiscence, and the passion for belonging. The novelist's explanations unveil how individual reminiscences are meticulously related with the collective memory of a country, validating the ways in which personal narratives can be viewed as a device for recovering identity in this situation.

On the other hand, Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* suggests a captivating examination of the topics of loss and return through the outlook of a family's experience as the result of the 1948 Nakba. Kanafani's text interlaces the personal with the political by showing how historical occurrences disrupt individual lives and identities. The story is about a Palestinian couple who, after years of exclusion, go back to their former home in Haifa, only to perceive the realities of dislocation and the instabilities instigated by time. Therefore, Kanafani's writing reveals the trauma of loss and also stresses the effect of memory and the combat for identity in a postcolonial context. As uttered by Pierre Nora (1989), "memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon" (p. 8). The personal narrative in *Returning to Haifa* is not just anecdotal; it echoes the whole collective memory of the Palestinian people and their unending brawls.

The selected novels have been analyzed by diverse researchers from diverse viewpoints; for example, "Who Would Dare to Make it into an Abstraction: Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*" (2007) by Bernard argues that *I Saw Ramallah* is a distinguished literary work and examines the personal and communal experiences of the Palestinian people. This authentic story offers a moving variety of his return to Ramallah, his childhood home, after many years of expulsion. As specified by Bernard, the book offers a distinguishing perspective on the Palestinian conflict. Barghouti emotionally shows the emotional impact of displacement, the loss of birthplace, and the inexpressible quest for a sense of belonging.

Through penetrating imageries and evocative language, Barghouti makes the reader join him on his journey, mixing individual reminiscences with communal recollections. Moreover, Barghouti's lyrical writing style clarifies the difficulty of emotions and gives voice to the hushed and relegated. Bernard finds that *I Saw Ramallah* defies the reader to challenge the inequalities and adversities experienced by the Palestinian people.

"Washing Words: The Politics of Water in Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*" (2013) by Farrier is about the figurative implication of water in Barghouti's description. Water acts as an influential metaphor for manifold ideas, including confrontation, memory, identity, and the real experiences of Palestinians living under occupation. Furthermore, water relates to the bigger issue of water dearth and access to clean water in the background of Israeli-Palestinian relations. The article in fact analyzes how Barghouti uses water imagery and narratives in order to refer to the encounters faced by Palestinians in their everyday lives and the effect of these challenges on their cultural and political identities.

"Words, Words, Words: Mourid Barghouti's Appropriation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in *I Saw Ramallah*" (2023) by Hamamra, Qabaha, and Qinnab studies how Barghouti mentions and draws from *Hamlet*'s themes and characters so as to discuss the Palestinian experience. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a famous tragedy characterized by themes of loss, exile, and political chaos. By including elements of *Hamlet* into his account, Barghouti uses the literary references to discuss similar themes in the context of the Palestinian skirmishes.

Also, "Blindness to Blindness: Trauma, Vision and Political Consciousness in Ghassân Kanafânî's *Returning to Haifa*" (2001) by Campbell concentrates on the literary work of Kanafânî and specifically inspects his novel *Returning to Haifa*. The article investigates Kanafânî's discussion of trauma, vision, and political consciousness. By analyzing the protagonist's experience of going back to his homeland, Haifa, after being exiled owing to the Arab-Israeli skirmish, the article underscores the mental and emotional influence of trauma on human beings. It also shows how the loss of vision, both literal and metaphorical, can function as an influential metaphor for the communal blindness and unawareness that disseminate political conflicts. It also touches upon the historical and political setting in which the novel was written and how it mirrors or critiques societal and political relations.

"Identity Crisis of the (I) and (the Other) in Gassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* and Anton Shammas's *Arabesque*" (2015) by Elhallaq and Habeeb is an article that discusses the novels written by Gassan Kanafani and Anton Shammas. The main point of the article is the inspection of identity and the association between the self and the other in these works. In Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*, the novel revolves around the themes of dislodgment and identity.

The story follows a Palestinian couple who were forced to leave their home thru the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and later return to Haifa. The novel shows their attempts to reunify their Palestinian identity with their new truth as expatriates living in Haifa. Anton Shammas's *Arabesque* is also about subjects of identity and the concept of the other. The novel is about the life of an Arab Christian boy raising in Israel and accentuates the struggles he goes through in coming to terms with his Arab and Israeli identities.

Mohammad and Meryan (2020) have also written a paper that inspects the effect of Kanafani's famous novel, *Returning to Haifa*. The research probes the themes, symbolism, and historical background of the novel, arguing the complexity of memory, identity, and trauma. The article first presents a short overview of Ghassan Kanafani's life and his inspiration on Palestinian literature. It then analyzes the narrative of *Returning to Haifa*, a story depicting the consequences of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The novel follows the journey of a Palestinian couple, Said and Safiyya, as they go back to their true home in Haifa, only to find it inhabited by an Israeli family.

The link between historical occurrences and personal narratives is a fundamental topic as it helps us inspect the postcolonial experience, principally in Palestinian literature. In *I Saw Ramallah* by Mourid Barghouti and *Returning to Haifa* by Ghassan Kanafani, the novelists dexterously argue their personal stories of deportation, fight, and identity conception in Palestine. Nonetheless, the problem is understanding how these narratives not only epitomize individual experiences but also function as an admonition of colonialism and the undying clashes of colonized people.

Edward Said's principles deliver a momentous framework for scrutinizing how these narratives defy and disapprove of prevailing historical discourses. Still, there remains a gap in the scholarship with reference to the specific mechanisms through which personal narratives utter the hitches of postcolonial identity and opposition. This study wants to fill this gap by inspecting how Barghouti and Kanafani's literatures debate the association between history and personal narrative. In this paper, it is tried to determine how these writers cope with the strain between personal memory and cooperative history.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Analyzing the Confluence of Historical Context and Personal Narrative

Investigating the association of history and personal narrative in *I Saw Ramallah* and *Returning to Haifa* is due to a number of substantial theoretical perspectives, primarily drawing from Edward Said's significant notions of Orientalism and identity creation in postcolonial contexts. By employing Said's conception of Orientalism, this paper seeks to carry out an all-encompassing examination of the way in which the chosen texts characterize the postcolonial experience.

Orientalism is a significant theory for this study. In his ground-breaking work, Said says that the West has historically formed an inaccurate assessment of the East, mostly the Arab world, which emphasizes stereotypes, exoticism, and cultural otherness. This outline can be applied to take in for questioning how Barghouti and Kanafani confront and destabilize these prevailing narratives in their works.

As well, both novelists have utilized their personal narratives to terminate the stereotypes well-maintained by Orientalist discourse. In *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti points to his homeland and prompts a feeling of homesickness and yearning that exceeds the naïve narratives of conflict. Additionally, Kanafani's characters in *Returning to Haifa* wrestle with themes of loss and belonging, elucidating the connotation of their experiences. This rebellion of stereotypes is a sort of clash due to proclaiming the authors' agency in creating their own narratives.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Identity and Collective Belonging in *I Saw Ramallah*

In *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti's imageries of the people he runs into, the recollections that reemerge, and the sense of rupture he suffers in a different setting unveil the difficulties of belonging and the aspiration for home. In his writing, Barghouti expresses the widespread experience of exile, where the craving for one's nation is entwined with the distressing acknowledgement of its rehabilitated state.

In addition, the story is overcome by a feeling of memory and nostalgia that infuses Barghouti's views. He often thinks about the exquisiteness of Palestine and its rich culture, different from the harsh realities of exile. This nostalgia is both relieving and demonstrating the dual nature of memory as both a shelter and a cause of suffering. The protagonist's recollections of Ramallah are interlaced with his identity as a Palestinian, reflecting a weighty relation with his birthplace and a scuffle to reunify the past with the present.

Said's concepts of the power relations in Orientalist discourse can illuminate the protagonist's conciliation of his identity in the larger geopolitical context of the Israeli-Palestinian war. In addition Said's denunciation of Orientalism displays how Western portrayals of the East often show it as sluggish, inexplicable, and in need of Western meddling. He notes that "the Orient is not an inert fact of nature" but a constructed narrative that represents the power subtleties of colonialism (Said, 1978, p. 5). This outlook agrees with the view that personal experiences are genuinely entrenched in the socio-political truths of colonial and postcolonial settings. As Homi K. Bhabha (1994) contends, "the act of narration is not simply a reflection of the past but a means of negotiating identity in the present" (p. 1).

In *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti's recollections of his country are brutally in disagreement with the realities he goes through upon his return after years of expatriate. The Ramallah he remembers, alive with life, culture, and community, has been changed by occupation and war, verifying the deep effect of geopolitical forces on individual identity.

The chief character's remembrances are not basically sentimental contemplations; they are strongly linked with his sense of self as a Palestinian. Barghouti's nostalgias awaken a solid emotional relationship with his home, which accentuates the effect of place in molding identity. Said's insights on the topic of the power relations similarly clarify the protagonist's experience. The Israeli-Palestinian clash is not merely an agenda; it is a thoughtful subject that influences the protagonist's identity and freedom. Barghouti's imaginations of his mother country confront the Orientalist stereotypes that epitomize Palestinians as idle victims or as part of an exoticized "other."

By convalescing and expressing his nostalgias and memories, Barghouti eagerly disturbs prevailing narratives that falsify the Palestinian story. Memory also plays a very crucial role in describing the protagonist Mourid Barghouti's acknowledgement of self and land of origin in his memoir. Barghouti's recollections of his origin, Ramallah, incite a feeling of nostalgia and yearning for a place that has endured substantial changes over time. In his memories, he builds a vibrant depiction of the setting, people, and culture of Ramallah. These remembrances not only relate him to his past but also impact his current identity.

This association to Ramallah accentuates the close link between personal identity and collective memory by signifying that one's sense of self is closely related with the historical and cultural narratives of their homeland. The act of recalling becomes an influential device for repossessing identity, as illustrated by Edward Casey (1987), who claims that "memory is not merely a repository of the past; it is a living, dynamic process that shapes our identities" (p. 210).

Similarly, memory is an instrument for Barghouti to talk about his personal journey and the political chaos that has affected his life and native land. As Susan Sontag (1977) speculates, "memory is a way of holding onto the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose" (p. 3). This feeling is echoed profoundly in Barghouti's narrative, where the act of remembering becomes an indispensable feature of his life and a system of confrontation against the expurgation of Palestinian identity.

By studying past happenings and feelings through memory, Barghouti reviews his own development, encounters, and resilience. His memories are a basis of command and supremacy, which enables him to cope with the difficulties of his identity and the influence of displacement on his sense of belonging. Barghouti has written:

The homeland does not leave the body until the last moment, the moment of death.

The fish,

Even in the fisherman's net,

Still carries

The smell of the sea. (p. 151)

The metaphor of the fish, which "still carries the smell of the sea" even when restrained in a fisherman's net, also exhibits the concept of a lifelong identity that surpasses corporal limitations. Just as the fish cannot flee from the essence of the sea that elevated it, human beings cannot cut the ties to their homeland. This imagery enflames a feeling of conflict and steadfastness; it proposes that identity is not utterly labelled by geographical locality but is also molded by the reminiscences and experiences that human beings convey within them.

Barghouti's images also show the existential aspect of belonging. The outlook that the birthplace stays in the body until death draws attention to a significant mystical bond with one's lineage. This association is not just about physical life; it includes a desire for a place that exemplifies one's history, culture, and identity. For countless Palestinians, the memory of their homeland is regarded as a base of power and comfort amid the adversities of exile. Barghouti also says:

Throughout the years of the Intifada, when women saw a young man captured by Israeli soldiers, they would attack the soldiers, all of them crying and screaming: 'My son, my son -- leave my son alone.' On this occasion the soldier, dragging the young man away, shouts: 'Go, you liar. How many mothers for one boy! A hundred mothers for one boy. Get away from here, go!' She screams at him: 'Yes! We're like that. A boy here has a hundred mothers, not like your kids, every boy has a hundred fathers!' (p. 92)

In this part from *I Saw Ramallah*, the author depicts the strong emotional landscape of the Palestinian experience throughout the Intifada by chiefly concentrating on the implication of women and the bottomless association between mothers and their sons in the war. The scene exemplifies an influential moment of maternal instinct and cooperative identity amongst Palestinian women.

The soldier's contemptuous statement, "How many mothers for one boy! A hundred mothers for one boy," represents a deadening viewpoint that lessens the inference of individual lives to mere numbers, suggesting that the presence of many mothers is not respected in the context of military authority. The reply from the mother, who ardently says, "Yes! We're like that. A boy here has a hundred mothers, not like your kids, every boy has a hundred fathers!" is a touching counter to the soldier's irony.

Her proclamation stresses the communal nature of motherhood in Palestinian society, where the pledge between mothers and their children surpasses biological connections.

This communal motherhood is a reaction to the communal trauma and loss undergone throughout the war, where every child is perceived as a son or daughter to many. Additionally, the mother's allegation that "every boy has a hundred fathers" emphasizes the concept of shared identity and the idea that the brawls of one are shared by all. This speaks to the harmony within the Palestinian community, where the combat for self-respect and rights is a common attempt that surpasses individual families.

### 3.2. Exploring the Complexities of Homeland and Identity in *Returning to Haifa*

Ghassan Kanafani was born in Acre in 1936 and he witnessed the fight of his fellow countrymen throughout the Nakba in 1948 which resulted in the formation of Israel, the expulsion of about 800,000 Palestinians from their homes, and the massacre of so many others. What distinguishes Kanafani from other Palestinian authors is that his writing makes people fight against their situations and use all their capabilities to build a superior future. Ghassan Kanafani as a significant Palestinian writer and intellectual, put substantial emphasis on the concepts of identity and memory in his texts.

His stories are often considered as a reflection of the collective memory of the Palestinian people due to seizing the anguish of loss and the yearning for a native land. Indeed, the act of storytelling in Kanafani's works is regarded as a tool for confrontation, enabling the reclamation of identity and memory in the midst of exile. As Linda Hutcheon (1988) emphasizes, "narrative is a way of making sense of the world" (p. 9), and in the context of the Palestinian narratives, it seeks to retrieve lost histories.

Kanafani's characters intermittently fight against their sense of self in exile. They signify the torment of exile while also replicating the power and determination of the Palestinian people. In the same way, Kanafani's attention to confrontation is a pivotal theme in his works. Along with his consideration of identity and resistance, Kanafani's style is celebrated for its rich imagery and affectionate solidity. His prose illustrates the exquisiteness and calamity of Palestine, demonstrating the yearning for a nation. This rich evocative tenor cultivates the emotive worth of his narratives, and allows the readers to make a connection with the characters' experiences on a deeper level.

Kanafani himself was displaced when he was very young, the problem which strongly changed his perspective on identity and memory. Kanafani's depiction of exile

underscores the emotive aftermaths of displacement on human beings and communities. Zaid (2017) has referred to the idea that Palestinians should return to their country since it belonged to them:

The Palestinian exile has not only forced Palestinians out of their physical environment; it has uprooted them from the community and shattered their fundamental social structures. Perhaps, it could be argued, the right to return rests on the interest in restoring one's social environment —the network of friends and relatives who provide one with a sense of social identity. (p. 242)

Furthermore, the disorder of societal structures has deep results on the shared psyche of the Palestinian people. The disintegration of communities brings about the destruction of collective histories, cultural practices, and shared memory, which are critical for preserving a unified identity. Zaid's viewpoint means that the right to return is not only a political claim but also an extremely personal and shared one. It exemplifies the wish to reconstruct the society that has been torn apart by banishment and war.

Barbara Harlow (2023) perceives the novel as demonstrating "Kanafani's effort to project in literature the vision of a "democratic solution" for the future of Palestine" (p. 173). For her *Returning to Haifa* is "a lesson which Kanafani attempted, as writer, critic, and active participant in the Palestinian resistance movement, attempted to elaborate, contributing significantly to the ideological and tactical debates within the resistance organizations" (p. 173).

Harlow's exploration of *Returning to Haifa* verifies the writer's purpose to carry a message of a "democratic solution" for the future of Palestine through his literary work. By portraying the intricacies and challenges undergone by Palestinian characters in the novel, Kanafani has used the narrative as his policy to promote a vision of a more comprehensive and impartial future for the country.

Harlow also recommends that Kanafani, as both a novelist and an active partaker in the Palestinian resistance movement, meant to use his writing to encourage the larger discussions within the resistance organizations. Through his representation of characters struggling with issues of identity, dislocation, and political struggle, Kanafani brings attention to the vital requirement for an inclusive and fair resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Singer (2011) utters:

Through a number of interrelated plots concerning return and a sustained examination of the problematic metaphors of home and land, *Returning to Haifa* concerns the impact of Palestinians who had fled during the 1948 war with Israel returning in 1967 (when the borders between what was formerly the Jordanian West Bank and Israel were reopened). (p. 20)

In *Returning to Haifa*, the characters' sense of identity is intensely under the influence of the colonial circumstances in Palestine. Edward Said's theories on Orientalism can extremely help us understand how colonialism affects the characters' discernments of themselves and others. Said's idea of Orientalism, as mentioned already, signifies the Western viewpoint regarding the East as a place of exoticism, humbleness, and otherness. This construction is a result of colonialism and has a great effect on how colonized people see themselves and their own identities.

The character of Said, for instance, symbolizes the difficulty of settlement of his Palestinian identity with the Western perceptions of Arabs and Palestinians. He copes with feelings of rupture and defeat as the consequence of colonialism that has changed his homeland to a place of combat and strangeness. The Western illustration of Palestinians as radicals or victims also complicates his self-identity, as he attempts to announce his humanity and cultural prosperity against dehumanization.

In *Returning to Haifa*, the characters are stuck in the middle of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which has unsettled their lives and identities. Said and Safiyya as a couple had to leave their house because of the 1948 war on Palestine. As well as their home, they also lost their son, Khaldun, whose name means "eternal" in Arabic. Khaldun is a chief character in *Returning to Haifa*. He plays a very important role in the story because, as mentioned, he is the son of the Palestinian couple, Said and Safiyya, who were obliged to leave him behind in Haifa throughout the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Khaldun is raised by Israeli parents and grows up with a different identity and life from what his real parents anticipated for him.

Khaldun epitomizes the concerns of identity, banishment, and the power of war on human beings and families. He illuminates the struggle of belonging to two incompatible worlds, the Palestinian legacy of his biological parents and the Israeli background by his adoptive parents. This dissimilarity causes an internal clash and mix-up for Khaldun as he has to find his place in society.

Khaldun's struggle for belonging is a sign of the more common subjects of loss and yearning that fill the novel. His quest for identity mirrors the collective experience of the colonized people. The mental pressure of Khaldun's character surpasses his personal clashes; his presence makes them recollect their memories, uncertainties, and opportunities for recuperation. His character defies both Said and Safiyya to see beyond their instantaneous anguish and to think through the bigger insinuations of their collective history, in addition to the likelihood of a future where understanding and synchronicity might be possible. Once Khaldun asks Said:

Perhaps none of that would have happened if you behaved the way a civilized and careful man should behave.... You should not have left Haifa. If that wasn't possible, then no matter what it took, you should not have left an infant in its crib. And if that was also impossible, then you should have never stopped trying to return. You say

that too was impossible? Twenty years have passed, sir! Twenty years! What did you do during that time to reclaim your son? If I were you I would've borne arms for that. Is there any stronger motive? (Kanafani, 1969, p. 65)

In this part, Khaldun confronts Said with a moving reflection on his actions and decisions concerning his son, Khaldun himself. Khaldun's words are filled with a combination of denunciation, obstruction, and a sense of moral responsibility, demanding Said to think about the outcomes of his past choices. Khaldun challenges Said's sense of responsibility and agency, and means that by behaving in a more confident and unyielding manner, Said could have possibly changed the sequence of happenings that brought about Khaldun's separation from his biological parents. The idea of behaving like a "civilized and careful man" suggests a definite level of proactive and influential action that Khaldun believes Said should have taken.

The mention of not leaving Haifa, not abandoning a baby, and unceasingly attempting to go back all refer to the notion of determination, willpower, and an unremitting search for what is lawfully theirs. Khaldun questions Said's inaction over the years, which underlines the meaning of taking tangible steps to convalesce what was lost. Khaldun's view that he would have "borne arms" to protect his son highlights the fathomlessness of his emotional concern and the influence of the craving for recuperation. This sentence also refers to the idea of fighting for freedom, rights, and familial associations, even if it implies taking radical actions.

Khaldun's resolution to repossess his family and homeland stands for a bigger fight for identity and belonging. As Judith Butler (2004) writes, "the desire for recognition can become a powerful motivator for action, even radical action" (p. 24). In Khaldun's case, his yearning to reunite with his son and regain his home becomes a convincing force that pushes him to challenge the realities of dislocation and loss.

Furthermore, Khaldun's internal conflict concerning his past and present mirrors the intricacies of memory and identity in postcolonial contexts. As Homi K. Bhabha (1994) states, "the past is never simply a past; it is always a negotiation between the historical and the personal" (p. 112). This negotiation is palpable in Khaldun's struggle, where his reminiscences of Haifa and his familial ties force him to defy the socio-political realities of his life.

The character of Said as the protagonist, for instance, struggles with his identity as a Palestinian who was exiled from his home in Haifa thru the Nakba. The trauma of losing his home and being detached from his family forms his sense of self and belonging. Macaluso (2022) claims:

The novel construes the Nakbah as a traumatic event that, despite its subjective meaning having long remained elusive, has never stopped affecting refugees' consciousness. It then proposes that the Arab defeat of 1967 offered an opportunity

for collective engagement and historical change to the Nakbah generation because it enabled them to reconcile their traumatic memories with their lives, inspiring their support for the Palestinian resistance. Such a parable of trauma integration counters the essentialist positions that Kanafani attributed to some Zionist literature and points to the reversal of the schemes aimed at humiliating the Palestinians. (p. 29)

In his examination of Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa*, Macaluso offers a captivating investigation of the Nakbah (the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948) and its deep influence on Palestinian immigrants. He says that the Nakbah is not only a historical occasion but a profoundly traumatic experience that continues to affect the realization of those influenced by it.

The downfall of Arab militaries in the 1967 war, as uttered by Macaluso, is a crucial moment for the Nakbah generation. The 1967 war acts as a re-investigation of the Nakbah and its implications. By recognizing and handling their traumatic recollections, people are allowed to dynamically take part in the brawl for their rights and identity. The incorporation of trauma becomes a basis of power, inspiring a collective reaction to repression and the longing for freedom. The Israeli colonial presence in Haifa underpins his feelings of dislodgment and estrangement, as he is always reminded of his position as a second-class resident in his own land. Once, he asks his wife:

What is a homeland? Is it these two chairs that remained in this room for twenty years? The table? Peacock feathers? The picture of Jerusalem on the wall? The copper-lock? The oak tree? The balcony? What is a homeland? Khaldun? Our illusions of him? Fathers? Their sons? What is a homeland? Is it the picture of his brother hanging on the wall? I'm only asking. (Kanafani, 1969, p. 36)

In fact, this excerpt echoes a deep sense of identity, belonging, and the difficulties of describing a homeland. Said is envisaging the meaning of a homeland as he looks around a room that has been unchanged for twenty years. He questions whether such objects as chairs, a table, peacock feathers, a picture of Jerusalem, a lock, an oak tree, or a balcony can truthfully explain a homeland. Said's reflective questions go beyond physical objects and invoke personal relations and reminiscences linked with people like Khaldun, his delusions, fathers, and their sons. The mention of his brother's picture on the wall adds meaning to the notion of a homeland.

Through this quotation, Kanafani intends to talk about the complication of defining a homeland not just as a physical place, but as an assortment of memories, identities, associations, and cultural signs. The protagonist's inspection consequently accentuates the mental pressure and hesitation that often go with the idea of a motherland. *Returning to Haifa* also illustrates the enduring impressions of colonialism on personal and shared identities. As stated, the novella re-counts the story of a

Palestinian couple going back to their previous home in Haifa, which is now taken by an Israeli family.

Said and Saffiya's return to Haifa makes them come across their past and the shocking occurrences that leads to their displacement. As Said and Saffiya encounter their preceding neighborhood, they are overwhelmed with memories of their life before the 1948 Nakba, when they were forcibly banished from their home. This repatriation is burdened with the weight of unsettled torment, as they are required to defy the troubling happenings that brought about their good-bye to their son, Khaldun, and their nation. Their reminiscences are entangled with the historical narrative of the Palestinian people.

For Said and Saffiya, the return to Haifa represents regaining their narrative and defying the suppression of their history. It makes them fight against the excruciating truth that their preceding home is now a sign of their loss, yet it also becomes a place for feasible settlement. Additionally, the novella reveals how colonialism has not only thwarted the colonized but has also shaped the identities of the colonizers.

The Israeli family observe themselves as permissible populations of the land, still this viewpoint is built on a basis of shortage and repudiation of the Palestinian experience. Said and Saffiya's return to Haifa is a minor version of the larger Palestinian fight for identity, admiration, and righteousness. Their journey captures the themes of memory and trauma, highlighting how colonialism continue to influence the lives of people and communities. Once, Said tells his wife:

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 dust 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....Dov is our shame, but Khalid is our enduring honor. Didn't I tell you from the beginning that we shouldn't come — because that was something requiring a war? Let's go! (Kanafani, 1969, p. 85)

In this quote, Said again refers to the notions of homeland, identity, and the differing viewpoints between generations in order to highlight the distinction between the past and the future. Said's words revolve around the complex nature of Palestine as a homeland. He compares the palpable, physical facets of Palestine embodied by objects like a vase, a picture, stairs, and particular individuals with the more nonconcrete, emblematic spirit of the homeland.

#### 4. Concluding Notes

This paper examined the ways in which personal stories typify and challenge the historical realities of the Palestinian postcolonial experience. Both authors capably connect their individual journeys with historical occasions, and show how personal accounts are not only replications of individual trauma but also vigorous apparatuses for collective memory. This relationship is representative of the implication of storytelling as a device for re-claiming identity and affirming presence in a place recognized by segregation and expatriate.

Barghouti's book refers to the emotional aftermath of exile and return, and also how going back to one's home is a replication of identity and belonging. His descriptions of the alterations caused by time and the philosophical sense of nostalgia lead to a communal experience amidst Palestinians. Through his narrative, Barghouti accentuates the role of memory in developing identity, and how the personal is basically political in the outline of postcolonial brawls.

Moreover, Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* delivers a controversial portrayal of the themes of loss and the thirst for home. The story reveals how the characters' experiences are inseparably associated with the historical event of the Nakba. Kanafani's explanation of the family's emotional journey echoes the trauma of banishment by featuring how personal stories can be regarded as acts of resistance against prevailing narratives that seek to silence or get rid of Palestinian voices.

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