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Writing the Resistance:

Ghassan Kanafani and Bobby Sands

An Exploration into Literature and Cinema

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Dedication

To the soul of my father who has been walking with me all along, unseen. For your unforgettable words of motivation to seek knowledge as much as I can, and I wish you were here.

To my caring and dear mother, I dedicate this thesis. For your support and your tears during these years of absence from home, your endless patience and unconditional love, thank you.

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I dedicate this thesis to all the suffering nations in the world struggling for freedom.

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Introduction

This study focuses on the development of revolutionary characters in the literature of resistance found in modern Arabic and Irish writings. This aim will be pursued through an explorative account of the major literary works of the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani and the Irish writer Bobby Sands and the cinematic adaptations of their literary texts. This involves a detailed discussion of *Returning to Haifa* and *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani, and *Writings from Prison* by Bobby Sands.

Resistance literature has yet to attain sufficient attention; therefore, this research is an attempt to shed more light on this form of literature. Moreover, it addresses the two different cultural struggles, both Palestinian and Irish, and unites them through the universal dimension of their messages. This research explores the hardship of "others" at a certain stage within their history, seeks to contribute to the revival of a cultural memory and reflects on the struggle and the sufferings of others, as they are mirrored in the novels of the literature of resistance and its revolutionary characters.

At the beginning, the main question was: how were revolutionary characters constructed and developed in the Arabic and Irish literature of resistance? Consequently, the main question fuelled more queries with regard to the role of the intellectuals, youth and women in the resistance movement and in the cultural resistance, as well as the historical events that led to the birth of revolutionary characters. Furthermore, the question of identity acts as one of the fundamental issues that this study aims to answer through a thorough investigation of the selected texts. The principal question led to the development of additional new questions, such as:

what represents home for the revolutionary character? What does exile mean for the revolutionary characters? Can a relationship between power and domination be detected?

The narrative prose of the resistance literature describes the process of the loss of land, loss of identity, resistance and exile. As stated by Edward Said, "novels imitate reality".¹ This research will, in fact, analyse the literary texts from a cultural approach, in addition to the historical, political and social backgrounds of the events that shaped the resistance literature. Resistance narratives offer a series of images that reflect reality and provoke questions on identity and the commitment of revolutionary characters. Moreover, narratives reveal the essence of power relations between the occupier and the occupied, with its aspects of domination and humiliation.

Concepts like resistance, *Nakba* (Palestinian catastrophe), trauma, identity, patriotism and exile will be analysed and discussed in the course of the selected literary texts through textual and contextual approaches. Therefore, studying the significance of the historical events that shaped the context and produced such texts and works has been essential, in order to define the notion of literature of resistance, and to analyse the historical, political and cultural events that influenced writers of resistance and inspired them to produce writings which were later categorised as writings of the literature of resistance.

¹ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary & Cultural Essays*, Granata Books, London, 2001, p. 42.

The theoretical framework that has molded this research work concentrates on theories of trauma, with particular focus on cultural trauma, a theory which was dealt with by Jeffrey C. Alexander in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* and Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Trauma discourse led to the question of identity or, as previously mentioned, the "search for an identity" in both Ghassan Kanafani and Bobby Sands' writings. Moreover, attention is paid to theories of colonial discourse which are the basis for the development of a post-colonial theory. In this context, Edward Said is one of the most important sources for analysing how occupation and colonialism are portrayed in the narratives of Ghassan Kanafani, in the perspective of that colonial discourse which produced concepts of exile and resistance. Additionally, Michel Foucault's theory of power in his essay *The Subject and Power* is fundamental in explaining the power relations between the occupier and the occupied in the selected Arabic and Irish texts. Ghassan Kanafani was influenced by socialist theories, and his narrative representation of the poor working class reflects certain aspects of the socialist thought and must be investigated from this point of view.

The thesis is divided into four sections. The introduction analyses the notion and definition of the literature of resistance. The first chapter deals with the collective and individual memory of the Palestinian catastrophe and the Irish struggle, and aims to provide a historical background of the events that influenced the act of writing in Palestine and Ireland. It mainly examines the Arabic writing (with particular focus on the novel) that arose after the Palestinian catastrophe, *Nakba*, in 1948, and the writing which followed the Arab setback in 1967. The influence that historical and political events, such as those mentioned, had on the development of novels and writing will

also be explored. Lastly, it investigates the Irish struggle for freedom; thus, explaining how historical events and politics contributed toward sculpting new types of characters, for example the revolutionary character.

The second chapter explores the themes of the loss of land and the "search for an identity". In this context, it is important to analyse the representations of the "other" in the literary works, as the concept of identity is relevant to the discourse of the "other". The "other" in Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa* is represented by the Jewish character. This chapter will also examine the relationship between an authority and occupation within socio-political and cultural aspects.

The third chapter investigates the theme of exile in the selected novels and explores its role in shaping the revolutionary characters. In this context, the theme of "home" becomes very evident, in relation of the question of home country, or how it should be. The fourth section focuses on the Irish struggle, resistance and the hunger strike led by Bobby Sands. It also discusses the conditions that shaped Sands as a writer in the Irish literature of resistance.

The notion of Literature of Resistance

My beloved home land
No matter how long the millstone
Of pain and agony churns you
In the wilderness of tyranny,
They will never be able
To pluck your eyes
Or kill your hopes and dreams
Or crucify your will to rise
Or steel the smiles of our children
Or destroy and burn,
Because out from our deep sorrows,
Out from the freshness of our spilled blood
Out from the quivering of life and death
Life will be reborn in you again.²

In Arabic language, the word *Muqawama* (resistance) comes from the Arabic root *q-w-m*. In the Arabic dictionary *Lisan Al-Arab (the Tongue of the Arabs)*, it means to resist the oppressors or to resist in a war, and the term *Muqawama Sha'biyya* (popular resistance or militia) means a resistant political movement which has its own ideology and armed forces to resist and fight the dictatorship or the occupation.

According to the Webster dictionary, the word “resistance” means a refusal to accept something new or different, or an effort made to stop or to fight against someone or something or the act or instance of resisting, i.e. opposition.

In her seminal book *Resistance Literature (1987)*, Barbara Harlow tries to find a definition for the literature of resistance. She starts from the self-evident statement that in the twentieth century colonised people have sought liberation from the colonisers' cultures of European and North American governments, which attempted to spread political and cultural domination over Third World countries. She believes

² F. Tuqan, *Ever Alive*, translated by Sulafa Hijjawi in *Poetry of Resistance in Occupied Palestine*, Directorate General of Culture, Baghdad, 1968, p. 21.

that such a struggle for liberation produced significant literary work, and that the literary work introduced new political, ideological, cultural and theoretical elements into this struggle. As she points out in her introduction to the book:

This literature, like the resistance and national liberation movements which it reflects and in which it can be said to participate, not only demands recognition of its independent status and existence as literary production, but as such also presents a serious challenge to the codes and canons of both the theory and the practice of literature and its criticism as these have been developed in the West.³

Harlow discusses how the instability caused by peoples and countries' leaders is contrived over and over again. Therefore, the theme of resistance is present in many genres and forms of literature, in poetry, as well as in narrative. She explains further how resistance literature was produced and discusses which elements led to the shaping of this literature:

The struggle for national liberation and independence, particularly in the twentieth century, on the part of the colonized peoples in those areas of the world over which Western Europe and North America have sought socio-economic control and cultural dominion has produced a significant corpus of literary writing, both narrative and poetic, as well as a broad spectrum of theoretical analyses of the political, ideological, and cultural parameters of this struggle.⁴

³ B. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, Methuen, New York, 1987, P. XVI.

⁴ B. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, p. XVI.

The term *Muqawama* (resistance) was first introduced into Arabic literature by Ghassan Kanafani in 1966 in his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966*. Kanafani gives an analysis of the writings that were produced under Israeli occupation. Furthermore, he explains how language could be a tool to resist and fight oppression.⁵

Kanafani states that *Muqawama* means the refusal of occupation and one's obligation to cling to one's native lands and origins⁶. With his commitment and role as an intellectual, and his self-consciousness in relation to the Palestinian case, Kanafani draws a pathway for coming generations, addressing what resistance really is and how it should be carried out. Kanafani believed that resistance should be applied to all aspects of life, cultural, political, social and military. Furthermore, he believed that cultural resistance is as important as armed resistance in order to understand the significance of one's native land. He was born during the British mandate⁷ in Palestine, which was paving the way for the creation of the Jewish state.

In his book *Adab Al-Muqawama* ("Literature of Resistance") (1970), Ghali Shukri states that Kanafani, as many other intellectuals of his time from Palestine,

⁵ G. Kanafani, *Adab Al-muqawama fi Filastin al-Muhtalla: 1948-1966* ("Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966"), Palestinian Studies Institute, Beirut, 1968, pp. 10-11.

⁶ G. Kanafani, *Adab Al-Muqawama fi Filastin al-Muhtalla*, p. 9.

⁷ After its dissemination, the Ottoman Empire was divided into different territories and were assigned to the parts victorious in the war. A provisional mandate was granted by the League of Nations to Britain in 1920 which extended the Jordan River. In 1922, the British restricted the boundary of Palestine to the area west of the river. This mandate was an international recognition of the purpose which Jews had stated for establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Arabs did not agree with the idea of a Jewish state on the land which they considered their home as they feared dispossession and rule of the Zionists, which eventually happened. www.Palestinefacts.org.

experienced the Arab tragedy day by day. Kanafani and intellectuals of his era struggled in an underdeveloped society in their Arab countries while experiencing the technological development and the cultural economic prosperity in Europe; accordingly, they were torn between the desire to distance themselves from this condition of underdevelopment, and their dream to live in their own society. Shukri explains that after the Palestinian tragedy, Arab intellectuals, including Kanafani, were united in one struggle, a struggle that incited the Arabs' aspirations to improve their standard of life on an economic, political, moral and cultural level, which was reflected in the Arabic literature as well.⁸

In Palestinian narratives, many important characters take part in making the events. Many characters play significant roles in the Arab resistance. The profiles of such characters vary from that of a father to a patriot hero, from an intellectual or an exile to a son or a mother or a sister or a refugee. All of them reinforce the advancement of the resistance movement. On the other hand, there is also the role of the traitor who betrays his country and his people.

In his preface to the book *al-Shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-mu'asira* ("The Character in the Modern Palestinian Novel"), Mohammad Ayoub, an Arab literary critic and an important scholar of the modern Palestinian novel, argues that the novel was a result of the ideological conflicts between different social classes. He makes reference to Mikhail Bakhtin⁹, who argued that the novel is present and evident

⁸ G. Shukri, *Adab Al-Muqawama*, Dar Al-Ma'aref, Cairo, 1970, p. 130.

⁹ See M. Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel: The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981.

in the times of the collapse of dominant and powerful civilizations or cultures¹⁰. Ayoub adds that literary production increases drastically in times of political distress or wars, which contribute to the literature of resistance¹¹. The Palestinian novel was influenced to a great extent by political changes and unrest following the political turmoil caused by the British mandate and later on by the Israeli occupation. Most novels focus on political themes concerning the suffering of people struggling for liberation and are centered around the idea of the "other", especially the Israeli or Jewish other.

Kanafani's deep political, cultural and historical consciousness of the situation in Palestine merits close attention. As pointed out previously, the present research examines some of Kanafani's innovative arguments about resistance in occupied Palestine, with a view to shed more light on the significance of his major narratives *Returning to Haifa* and *Men in the Sun*, which have inspired generations of writers and intellectuals to date. The novels were written by Kanafani during the momentous years in the history of the Palestinian tragedy and each novel reveals his individual ideological development in the process of the loss of land, exile and defeat caused by the Israeli occupation.

Kanafani demonstrates the role and the responsibility of the intellectuals in resistance, and also reveals how the power of words can bring about a positive change in people's struggles. On this topic, a passage from Kanafani's study *Literature of*

¹⁰ M. Bakhtin, *Al-Khitab Al-riuai*, translated by Muhammad Barada, Dar Al-Fikr lil Dirasat, Cairo, 1987, p. 17.

¹¹ See M. Ayoub, *al-Shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-mu'asira*, Maktab Al Nil Lil Nashr, Cairo, 1996.

Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966 , quoted by Barbara Harlow in her influential book *Resistance Literature*, seems quite illuminating:

The attempts at a history of the resistance literature of a given people are usually, for reasons that are self-evident, accomplished after liberation. With respect to the literature of resistance in occupied Palestine, however, it is necessary that the Arab reader in general and the Palestinian emigrant in particular study its persistent continuation, because it is fundamentally to be found in the language itself and speech of the Arabs of occupied Palestine. The resistance springs from these linguistic initiatives, working together with the rigidity of the conditions of the situation.¹²

Edward Said discusses the same issue on the role of the intellectual in resistance in his imperative book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). He explains that resistance is a process consisting of many essential stages. It is the second stage that is important here, as that stage is the ideological resistance in which the intellectual plays the leading role in reshaping various sets of thoughts and mentalities, yet having the resistance movement in mind as a priority. Said asserts that resistance raises questions on patriotism and nationalism as a consequence of imperialism or occupation.

After the period of "primary resistance", literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes the period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are

¹² G. Kanafani, *Adab Al-Muqawamah fi Filistin Al-Muhtalla 1948-1966* ("Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966"), quoted in B. Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, p. 3.

made to reconstitute a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system".¹³

Accordingly, resistance is a natural result of occupation, imperialism or any form of foreign domination, whether geographical or cultural. From this point of view, we witness the birth of a new form of literature; that is resistance literature, which carries out what the resistance movement started, reinforcing and embodying all aspirations of liberation and freedom.

Ghassan Kanafani and Bobby Sands played important roles in contributing to resistance literature and, in some cases; they played a direct and leading role in the resistance movement. For example, Ghassan Kanafani was a political activist in addition to his passion for literature and writing, and it was this combination that honored him as the Father of Resistance Literature in Palestine. Bobby Sands was an activist, politician and his writings reflect his deep involvement in the Irish resistance to the British imperialism.

Through their narrative characters, the writers of resistance literature depict an image of how resistance should be. The symbolism found in narratives is extremely suggestive. This study discusses how settings, especially geographical place, play a role in defining power relations between an occupier and an occupied, between a native citizen and a colonialist.

As many writers of resistance literature, Kanafani's characters reflect his own voice and vision of resistance. Some writers deploy their words to express their

¹³ E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1993, p. 209.

refusal of any sort of occupation of territories, or any kind of forced authority that takes them away from their own homelands.

Writers of resistance literature defend themselves and their own people through writing. Kanafani was directly engaged in the political arena in Palestine. He paid close attention to the developments of the reality of the Israeli occupation and the drastic social and cultural changes that were occurring in the Palestinian life. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said explains this form of resistance:

The post-imperial writers of the Third World therefore bear their past within them- as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending toward a post-colonial future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonist.¹⁴

Kanafani stressed the importance of preserving the Arabic language, and the Palestinian heritage and culture, as they were facing the dangerous risk of elimination due to the Israeli occupation. In this context, in his study on resistance literature, Kanafani addressed the issue of the Arabic language, especially for Palestinian Arabs who are living in Israel and attending Hebrew schools. Whereas Bobby Sands stressed the importance of preserving the Gaelic language and insisted on learning and speaking the Gaelic as he considered it part of his Irish identity and a tool to resist the English dominance.

¹⁴ E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 212.

Every culture experiences resistance in all of its forms at a certain moment of its own history. This contributes to the universality of resistance which is characterised by humane dimensions. Struggles result in resistance movements that also inspire writers to express their ideas and feelings regarding a specific struggle as a way to resist or defend or even find a solution for the struggle in question.

For example, the Italian resistance movement was very inspiring for many writers of literature of resistance in Italy. Moreover, many of those writers, such as Beppe Fenoglio, were participants in the Partisan War. This movement was formed during World War II by partisans who joined together for one cause, the liberation of Italy from the Nazi occupation. Members of this movement, the partisans, varied from ordinary citizens who opted for the partisan life to defend their country, to former soldiers and members of political parties. However, due to the different political affiliations and backgrounds, the variety of the formations of resistance that arose prevented the birth of a sole narrative of the events.

The Italian Resistance (1943-1945), or the struggle for liberation in Italy, marked a significant moment in Italian history and literature. By the end of 1943, Italy had been divided into two parts: the center and the north of Italy, which were under the control of the Republic of Salò, the Italian Social Republic led by Mussolini, who transformed his government into a fascist dictatorship, and the southern part of the center and the south of Italy, which were ruled by the King of Italy Victor Emanuel III.¹⁵

¹⁵ See T. Bahan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies*, Pluto Press, London, 2009, p. xii.

On 8 September 1943, the German Nazis invaded Italy and occupied the country. As Germans started to move troops into the north, the Italian resistance movement developed on a large scale. Partisan forces consisted of disbanded soldiers, some members of political parties and some local peasants, who went up the hills and mountains to form guerilla bands to defend the country from the occupation. The Committee of National Liberation took control over the Resistance movement. The movement was divided into three main brigades: the Communist Garibaldi, Justice and Liberation, and Socialist Matteotti Brigades. Meanwhile, the allied armies welcomed this movement, which was to be considered as an alliance in the war against the Nazi occupation.

The Italian resistance movement involved the whole society; it was a military and political movement to defeat the Nazi occupation and then overthrow the fascist regime. This movement is distinguished by the variation of the people who joined in the fight. In his book *The Italian Resistance*, Tom Bahan discusses the uniqueness of the Italian resistance movement: he suggests that it is the story of how the ordinary people who lived their entire lives controlled under dictatorship played a key role in both fighting the German occupation and the fascist dictatorship.

The importance of the Italian resistance lies in the support of the Italian people. Bahan discusses how the Allies encouraged the resistance movement and the partisan formations as part of their war operations; while Allies fought Germans and pushed them to the north, Italian partisans helped them. Bahan draws attention to the key role partisans played, he even cites the German Commander Field-Marshal Kesselring who admits the existence of partisans in his memoir, and also admits that partisan bands had an excellent intelligence network, and were supported on a large

scale by the Italian population. Italian people collaborated with the partisan brigades against German soldiers by creating a warning system which placed German soldiers' lives in danger.

The partisans' personal and political commitments were mirrored by political support from the local population, without which most groups would not have been able to survive.¹⁶

The resistance movement in Italy faced some problems. One of these problems was that some of the partisans who joined the fight were simple and unpredictable. Many of those young partisans understood communism as a system of disobedience and anarchy. This resulted in mass numbers of inexperienced simple partisans with smaller groups of experienced partisans. The resistance movement was made up of working-class members that took on a role of reshaping a new Italy and getting rid of the German occupation and brutality, which lasted for over 18 months, while the German occupation was supported by the Italian fascist regime.

It has been popular for many Italians- it was a war fought by volunteers. All Resistance fighters made their own personal decision that it was right to risk their own lives for a cause- a very different decision from that of someone joining an army because they received their call-up papers through the letter box.¹⁷

¹⁶ T. Bahan, *The Italian Resistance*, p. 76.

¹⁷ T. Bahan, *The Italian Resistance*, p. 5.

One must draw attention to the great power of the literature of resistance in preserving history, reality and memory. The Partisan War is considered a turning point in the history of Italy and in the Italian literature of the twentieth century, as many great works were produced and dedicated to resistance and the Partisan War in Italy. Beppe Fenoglio is considered the greatest writer of resistance in Italy. Experiencing life as a partisan gave him an exceptional excellence in narrating resistance, without any constraints, as he registered reality as it was and as he experienced it as a partisan.

As is apparent in Fenoglio's writing, themes of resistance are powerful literary tools in literature. He tells his story with a great degree of authenticity and honesty. Fenoglio does not represent ideal, perfect role models; instead he successfully portrayed the incredible struggle one has to have human equilibrium and balance. In his narratives and literary representations, Fenoglio attempts to show readers that fighting against Nazism and fascism is not only a simple fight against the "other side" (such forces represent a radical evil, a block against life, civilization and history) but that fighting this evil is a duty. Fenoglio's representation of reality is tragic and very realistic: he does not hide anything; he represents horror as it is, and he does not fall in the trap of idealising one part just because it is considered to be on the 'right side'.¹⁸

Fenoglio, and many other young writers who emerged from the war of liberation, published their first stories immediately after the war, and those stories mostly dealt with the Partisan War. In their works, the image of the arrogant inhuman

¹⁸ See G. Ferroni, M. Gaeta, G. Pedullà, *Beppe Fenoglio Scrittura e Resistenza*, Edizioni Fahrenheit 451, Roma, 2003, p. 10.

German soldier is dominant. Nuto Revella's book *Mai Tardi. Diario di un alpino in Russia* (1946) is just an example of this representation of the cruel German soldier.

1. The Collective and Individual Memory in Arabic Writing: Palestinian Nakba

This chapter examines the influence of the historical events that shaped the collective and individual memory of literature in Palestine. To begin with, the concept of “*Nakba*” will be analysed, as it is of great importance in Arabic memory, but more specifically in Palestinian memory, both collectively and individually. It is worth mentioning that Palestinian literary production was deeply influenced by the traumatic and tragic events of 1948, when Palestinians were expelled and driven out of their homes by the Zionist militias, the same year that coined the establishment of the state of Israel on Palestinian lands. Accordingly, this historical moment of *Nakba* had a significant influence over Arab thinkers and intellectuals. Moreover, it offered Arabic literature a new dimension, and in this light, literature of resistance began to acquire its own features and style. Meanwhile, this new literary production had a significant influence on liberation movements and on people longing for freedom, consequently encouraging them to continue their struggle against colonial domination.

Naturally, every form of domination, which, as already said, is considered a threat to the cultural identity of native people, inevitably influences thinkers of the occupied or colonised culture. Thus, resistance literature was born as a means to defend and preserve people's cultural heritage and homeland. It will be necessary to discuss how these historical events took part in the creation of the revolutionary characters in these novels. The present study investigates two questions regarding Arabic literature: did writing change after the war of 1948? What are the distinguishing themes of writing after both 1948 and 1967?

In his preface to the translation of Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal work on the novel *Al-Khitab Al-riuai* (*Speech Genres* 1986), Mohammad Barada explains Bakhtin's view of the novel and culture. He writes that, according to Bakhtin, the novel is a part of the culture of a society, as well as culture itself, because the novel consists of narratives recognised by the collective memory and everyone should have the liberty to form their own conception about these narratives. Thus, the novel becomes a realisation of the importance of language in a specific society, which also leads us to read the ideologies surrounding us. Ideology, according to Bakhtin, refers to a group of reflections inside man's brain, which represents social and natural reality, and writing could be a means to reveal those reflections.¹⁹ This emphasises the importance of narratives, as it reflects reality and participates in shaping the collective and individual memory of people.

The word “*Nakba*” comes from the Arabic root Na-ka-ba, which, according to the Almaani Arabic dictionary, means “disaster”, “tragedy”, “catastrophe” or “calamity”. Costantine Zurayk (1919-2000), the Syrian historian and intellectual, was the first to refer to the Palestinian catastrophe as “*Nakba*” in August 1948, right after the *Nakba* 1948, in his book *Ma'ana al-Nakba* (“*The Definition of Nakba*”). Zurayk described the progress of the war as *Nakba* from the beginning of the war. His definition is based on his prediction that this war was to threaten the Arab unity and

¹⁹ M. Bakhtin, *Al-Khitab Al-riuai*, transl. by Muhammad Barada, p. 23.

the Pan-Arab project. The *Nakba* was to threaten the dream of liberation from colonialism, as Palestine is part of the Arab *Ummah* (nation).²⁰

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 led to the destruction of the Palestinian society. It also led to continuous historical and political changes in Palestine. *Nakba* did not end in 1948, rather the catastrophe has continued to the present day, causing further historical, political and social complications for Palestinians.

For Palestinians, the 1984 War led indeed to a "catastrophe". A society disintegrated, a people dispersed, and a complex and historically changing but taken for granted communal life was ended violently. The Nakba has thus become, both in Palestinian memory and history, the demarcation line between two qualitatively opposing periods. After 1948, the lives of the Palestinians at the individual, community, and national level were dramatically and irreversibly changed.²¹

The loss of land, the destruction of many Palestinian cities and villages, and occupation are a threat to the existence of Palestinians. In 1948, a nation and a people became nameless; accordingly, *Nakba* caused traumatic and tragic moments in the collective and individual memories of Arabs and Palestinians in particular. This tragedy resulted in a serious and controversial question: does a Palestinian identity exist?. As mentioned before, this research traces some elements of the *Nakba* and its

²⁰ A. Al-Hardan, *Ma Hiya Al-Nakba? ("What is Nakba?")*, May 17, 2015, article on Jadaliyya (online magazine), www.jadaliyya.com, retrieved: 9 July, 2015.

²¹ A. Sa'di, L. Abu Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Colombia University Press, New York, 2007, p. 3.

complications in the writings of Ghassan Kanafani, who represents the emergence and birth of a new Palestinian consciousness.

The Palestinian collective memory is based on both the events that led to the catastrophe and the events that took place after it. The constant manipulation of history through mass media engineered by Zionism led to a serious exclusion of the Palestinians from their own land. Golda Meir²² promoted the idea that Palestinians did not exist, neglecting the Palestinian presence; thus, leaving them with no identity and no national rights. Consequently, Palestinian intellectuals were urged to make their voices heard, to tell their individual and collective stories that make up the Palestinian *Nakba*, and to represent the collective memory of a people that were driven away from their own land and homes. Writers realised from the onset that writing had become a means to prove their existence, their Palestinian identity and their rights to return to their native land and their own homes. Despite this, the Palestinian narrative stands weak alongside the Israeli narrative of the Zionist slogan (land without people, for a people without land), which has turned into a "fact" all over the world. In Israeli history, Palestinians were not officially recognised, they were just non-Jews, and subject to the Israeli exclusion policy.

Despite the MacBride Commission's view that "the facts speak for themselves" in the case of Zionism's war against the Palestinians; the facts have never done so, especially in America, where Israeli propaganda seems to lead a life of its own... one should add that Likud's anti-terrorist language and methods represent only an increase

²² Golda Meir was Israel's fourth Prime Minister. She was known as the Iron Woman in Israeli politics.

in intensity over previous Israeli policies, which were no less callous about Palestinians as real people with a real history.²³

In his essay *Permission to Narrate*, Edward Said argues that the Israeli occupation could do anything to the Palestinians, as they were not yet being condemned, in fact were rather justified, especially in the United States. He explains how facts do not speak for themselves in the Israeli narrative; it requires an acceptance of the truth of a certain narrative by the community and then its circulation. Moreover, he associates history with authority. He mentions the example of the resolutions of the UN. In fact, even though the Palestinian case is legitimate and legal, the Palestinians do not yet have the authority to enact the resolutions of the UN, and neither does the UN itself have the power to enact its resolutions in favour of the Palestinians.

Insofar, as the West has complementarily endowed Zionism with a role to play in Palestine along with its own, it has stood against the perhaps humble narrative of native Palestinians once resident there and now reconstituting themselves in exile in the occupied territories²⁴.

Furthermore, Edward Said criticizes the lack of counter-narrative in the West. The West had been hearing about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from one side: the Zionist propaganda of the Israeli side. This emphasises the role assigned to the Zionist

²³ E. Said, *Permission to Narrate*, Journal of Palestine Studies, vol. 13, no. 3, University of California Press, Spring 1984, p. 29.

²⁴ E. Said, *Permission to Narrate*, p. 36.

occupation as representatives of democracy, and also accused the Palestinians of terrorism; therefore, it should fight these terrorists (supported by the West, especially the United States), which justifies the Israeli ethnic cleansing and genocides of the Palestinians. Said also criticizes the silence from many anti-apartheid activists around the world who stand in silence with regard to Palestinians and Israel.

The Palestinian case is further complicated by the intimate intertwining over the past century of the Palestinian narrative with one of the most potent narratives in existence, that of Israel and the Jewish people... the interweaving of these two narratives reaches the point that in much public discourse about the Palestinians in the United States, their narrative can be considered only in terms of the other, and as a rule such discourse is constructed in terms of a rigid polarity between the two narratives. This polarity is sometimes justified, but at other times it is artificially imposed: it often means that permission can not be granted for a Palestinian voice to be heard-even in matters having absolutely nothing to do with Israel- without the reassuring presence of its Israeli school. The opposite, of course, is not true: a Palestinian voice is not necessarily required when exclusively Israeli or Jewish concerns are aired.²⁵

Through his detailed descriptions of simple Palestinian characters, Ghassan Kanafani tries to fight against the Zionist version of the story. As an intellectual, Kanafani stressed the importance of writing on Palestinian resistance, the Palestinian struggle to exist, the struggle against the ethnic cleansing they had to undergo, to document everything about Palestine. In his narrative *Returning to Haifa*, which will

²⁵ R. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity; the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, p 146.

be discussed in the second chapter, he points out the importance of the Palestinian memory.

It is worth mentioning here that Kanafani represents the voice of all Palestinians. He took the responsibility upon himself to write about the Palestinian tragedy or *Nakba* because he realised the importance of archives. Those archives are the results of the oppression of the Israeli occupation, but archives also came from the legitimate Palestinian struggle. In his important book *Nakba: La Memoria Letteraria della Catastrofe Palestinese* Simone Sibilio discusses in depth and analyses the literary memory of the Palestinian catastrophe and the importance of registering the reality and the experiences of the Palestinians in Kanafani's literature:

Ghassan Kanafani è stato scrittore sensibile nel registrare le vibrazioni della realtà del suo popolo e la straordinaria complessità delle diverse esperienze vissute nei suoi romanzi ha trasportato le ansie, le sofferenze e le speranze dei palestinesi... le sue opere riflettono la necessità di trattare il dramma palestinese sul piano del confronto umano con l'esperienza di un altro popolo storicamente perseguitato.²⁶

Sibilio also explains that Kanafani, as a sensible writer, managed to register the fears, sufferings and hopes of the Palestinians. Sibilio also argues that Kanafani's writings pay close attention to the necessity to reflect on the suffering of another people when dealing with the Palestinian experience. Thus, Kanafani realized his role as an intellectual and the responsibility to narrate the reality of his people, and this

²⁶ S. Sibilio, *Nakba. La Memoria Letteraria della Catastrofe Palestinese*, Edizioni Q, Roma, 2013, p. 167.

role also involves knowing the “other”; this point will be discussed further in the second chapter.

There is somewhat of a consensus among intellectuals and writers, such as Kanafani, on the responsibility and the role they should play in resistance.²⁷ On 26 April 2013, in an interview by Sonia Grieco, the Palestinian writer Salman Natour stressed the importance of the role of the Palestinian intellectual after the *Nakba*, with particular emphasis on the safeguarding and the act of passing down the history of that period.

lo scrittore ha ribadito che il ruolo dell'intellettuale, in particolare di quello palestinese, è di custodire e di tramandare la storia del suo popolo perchè "se perderemo la memoria ci sbraneranno le iene".²⁸

²⁷ See also S. Natour, *Memoria*, Edizioni Q, Roma, 2008.

²⁸ SONIA GRIECO, *Natour: l'identità contro l'occupazione culturale*, interview with the Palestinian writer Salman Natour, Roma, 26 April, 2013, Nena News (online). http://nena-news.globalist.it/Detail_News_Display?ID=72605, retrieved: 7 November, 2013.

1.1. Writing after the *Nakba*

As previously mentioned, this research deals with the modern novel; therefore, it is important to study the historical background that brought about and influenced this genre of writing. In the Palestinian case, Arabic literary production was divided into two periods, which are both important historical moments in the life of Palestinians: firstly, the period which followed the catastrophe or *Nakba* in 1948 and, secondly, the historical period after the *Naksa* (setback) in 1967. As a result of these two periods, the modern Arabic novel went through transformations. Such transformations included the creation of a new type of character (the rebel or revolutionary) and the shaping of resistance literature:

Time ... is the novel's life: as historical moment and as history of form, temporality makes the world's pressure amenable to verbal structure²⁹.

Arabic Writing was, to a great degree, influenced by the historical and political changes that took place in the Arab World. It was impossible that an Arab writer (or any Arab) could have isolated himself from the Palestinian issue for many reasons, whether geographic, linguistic, political, moral or religious reasons. This is clear as the themes of the *Nakba*, loss of land and families, loss of identity, Israeli-Palestinian conflict and refugee issues dominated the Arabic literary arena.

²⁹ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 44.

The events of 1948 changed the way Arabs viewed themselves and the world. This was particularly the case for Palestinians, who felt abandoned and betrayed by the world, as they were blamed for the loss of their land Palestine and the expulsion from their native land by the occupation forces. Ghali Shukri discusses the crisis after the catastrophe in 1948 by explaining that the Palestinian people were left behind, with no friends or companions only death from the moment they were forced to leave their land.³⁰ Moreover, Zionism revealed the disunity of Arabs, resulting in feelings of weakness and worthlessness. Literature that was produced after 1948 reflects these aspects of Arab history in general, specifically Palestinian history. For many writers, such as Ghassan Kanafani, writing became a form of resistance against the reality of the occupation. Kanafani started writing in the refugee camps in Syria; he started writing short stories that reflected the reality of the Palestinians who were, as stated before, expelled from their lands.

Writing produced after 1948 also showed a transformation in Arabic literary production. The establishment of the Jewish homeland on Palestinian land was too difficult for Arabs to comprehend. The literary production at the time expressed themes of loss, self-loss, disappointment, disillusion and expulsion. These themes are partly due to the shock the Palestinians were still experiencing, as a result of the tragedy. They were forced to evacuate their houses, leaving under the impression that they would then return in a matter of days after the Zionist militias, like Haganah, had left.

³⁰ See G. Shukri, *Adab Al-Muqawama*, p. 141.

The Zionist militias played important role in the Palestinian exodus. The armed militias terrorised Palestinians with means of weapons to force them to leave their houses or get killed. Eventually, Palestinians had no choice but to leave to spare their lives. The most important militia player during the *Nakba* 1948 was the *Haganah* (meaning "defense" in Hebrew). Under the British mandate, the Zionists withdrew from the mandatory state and established their own autonomous institutions, including an armed organisation. In fact, the *Haganah* was a sectarian army under the command of the labor movement. After 1936, the Jewish Agency took control over the organisation. Many Israeli historians consider the present Israeli military force a continuation of the *Haganah*. The *Haganah* militia envisioned itself as the seed of a Jewish armed force. Some Zionist critics believe that the *Haganah* provided defense for the Jewish settlements and protected the Jews.³¹

The Jewish Agency played as well an important part in the Palestinian *Nakba* alongside the *Haganah* militias. It was founded in August 1929,³² as a representative arm to the World Zionist Organization. As a matter of fact, its beginnings go back to the early 1908, it was known as the Palestine office. It was created to represent the Jews of Palestine. Its main purpose developed to include helping the world's jews to settle and immigrate to Palestine and to set up a Jewish economy. In 1933, after the Nazi regime took over power in Germany, the Jewish Agency facilitated the increase of the quota of the clandestine Jewish immigrants to Palestine. In 1935, David Ben-Gurion, who later became Israel's first Prime Minister in 1948, was elected chariman

³¹ See B. Kimmerling, *The Invention of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, University of California, Berkeley, 2005, p. 30.

³² See www.jewishagency.org.

of the Agency. After the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948, the Agency devoted its work to Jewish immigration, settlement, propaganda and cultural education of Jews outside Israel.³³

Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa* (analysed in the second chapter) explores this: a Palestinian couple go back to Haifa city, their homeland, after the Israeli occupation has opened the borders, and they suddenly recall everything that had happened the day they were forced to leave Haifa in April 1948; their memory floods back at once, flashbacks of *Nakba*, the *Nakba* which is still going on today. This leaves the couple in a state of shock and they find themselves reliving the traumatic events all over again.

With that scene, the terrible past came back to him in all its tumultuousness. For the first time in twenty years he remembered what happened in minute detail, as though he were reliving it again³⁴.

In *Returning to Haifa*, Said S. recalls the events of the war in 1948 with a very dramatic and powerful image of the exodus. This image is printed in the collective memory of the Palestinians who were driven out of their homes and lands. In the narrative, the Protagonist Said S. speaks for what all Palestinians had felt on that day:

³³ See Encyclopedia Britannica, Jewish Agency, www.britannica.com, retrieved: 5 January, 2016.

³⁴ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories*, translated by Barbara Harlow & Karen Riley, Lynne Reiner Publishes, London, 2000, p. 153.

The sky was on fire, crackling with shots, bombs and explosions, near and far. It was as though the very sounds themselves were pushing everyone toward the port. Even though he could not concentrate on anything specific, he could not help but see how the throng of people thickened with every step. People were pouring from the side streets into the main street leading down to the port- men, women and children, empty-handed or carrying a few small possessions, crying or being floated along in paralyzed silence in the midst of the clamor and confusion. He was swallowed up in the rushing wave of humanity and lost the ability to direct his own steps. He kept remembering that he was being swept along by the dazed and crying throng toward the sea, unable to think about anything else. In his head was one picture only, suspended as though hanging on a wall: his wife Safiyya and his son Khaldun.³⁵

The protagonist Said S., just like all other Palestinians, could not understand or comprehend the events that were about to take place. He was in shock, and was driven with the flood of humans to the ports. This scene from the novel depicts the collective exodus of the Palestinians. In this scene, Arabs have no control over their own destiny. It also forms the collective memory of the Palestinian *Nakba*, in which Palestinians can talk about their collective experience; however, they are silent about their individual experiences. For example, Said S. did not talk about his son Khaldun who was left behind in the house as a child while his parents (Said S. and Safiyya) were driven to the ports not to return to their house until after 20 years, when the borders were opened. For 20 years, Said S. was incapable of talking about his individual experience, not even with his wife. They were silent for almost 20 years, never mentioning Khaldun; they would talk about the loss of Palestine but never about the loss of their own son. His memory held onto every single detail of his city, the roads he used to take and his own home. The way in which his memory came back

³⁵ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa*, p. 155.

to him was surprising, as though it had been buried deep inside his mind and heart and then it suddenly rained down upon him. This could be said to be an expected occurrence after a traumatic event, as if Said S. were recovering from a coma.

Here they were, gazing silently at the road they both knew so well, its memory stuck fast in their heads like part of their very flesh and bones...he looked around, rediscovering the items, sometimes little by little and sometimes all at once, like someone recovering from a long period of unconsciousness.³⁶

Edward Said characterises narrative writing after 1948 by the emphasis which was placed on the scene. He explains how the scene became problematic; this scenic method is prevalent in Ghassan Kanafani's novels after 1948. It is more evidently found in many scenes in his *Men in the Sun* (analysed in the third chapter). Marwan, one of the three Palestinian characters that pursues smuggling as a means of entering Kuwait in search of a better life, approaches one of the overweight smugglers who refuses to help smuggle him into Kuwait for less than fifteen dinars. This scene begins with Marwan leaving the shop and finding himself in a crowded street, clueless as to where he should go and feeling he has lost his last hope. He recalls the reaction of the smuggler as if his words were bullets striking his chest:

Marwan came out of the shop belonging to the fat man who smuggled people from Basra to Kuwait, and found himself in the crowded street, which smelt of dates and big straw baskets. He had no definite idea where to make for now; there, inside the shop, the last threads of hope that had held together everything inside him for long

³⁶ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa*, p. 160.

years had been snapped. The last words the fat man had spoken were decisive and final; it seemed to him that they were forged from lead.

"fifteen dinars, can't you hear?" ³⁷

Accordingly, this could be seen as a foreshadowing for the final scene of the novel, which ends with the death of this character along with the death of his hopes and dreams, having been brought to an end by suffocation in a tanker-truck in the middle of the desert. Edward Said explains this scenic method, stating that the scenic use in Kanafani's writings after 1948 acts more than just a novelistic scene, but as a way of provoking the character into action:

The sustained tension between the present and either the past or the future creates the scene which, in turn, is (not a reflection of) the present in a form of raised tension with the past and the future. ³⁸

In conclusion, the events of 1948 reshaped the modern Arabic novel. Themes of confusion and silence took on great parts of these narratives. Moreover, following 1948, writers chose writing as a way to act upon the disaster, such as Ghassan

³⁷ G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, trans. Hilary Kilpatrick, p. 35.

See Also: G. Kanafani, *Rijal Fi al-shams* in *Al-Athar al-KAmila, Al-A'mal (Complete Collection of Novels)*, volume I, Arabic Research Institute, Beirut, 1999, p. 71.

"خرج مروان من دكان الرجل السمين الذي يتولى تهريب الناس من البصرة إلى الكويت، فوجد نفسه في الشارع المسقوف الذي تفوح منه رائحة التمر و سلال القش الكبيرة... لم تكن لديه أي فكرة محددة عن وجهته الجديدة... فهناك داخل الدكان، تقطعت آخر خيوط الأمل التي شددت لسنوات طويلة، كل شيء في داخله... كانت الكلمات الأخيرة التي لفظها الرجل السمين حاسمة ونهائية، بل خيل إليه أنها كانت مصبوبة من رصاص:

-خمسة عشر ديناراً... ألا تسمع؟"

³⁸ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 56.

Kanafani. Writing succeeding 1948 became a form of resistance. These writers knew that they could not relive the past, but believed that their writing could be a way of trying to voice their thoughts and feelings about it. They realised the importance of telling their stories no matter how disappointed they were with the Arab leadership and the British who gave away a land, which did not belong to them, to the Zionist Jews to establish their state.

1.2. Writing after the *Naksa* (setback)

If the year 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel are inscribed in Arab historical annals as the *Nakba*, then 1967 has been indelibly recorded as the year of the "defeat", the *Hazimah* or *Naksa*.³⁹

The *Naksa* of 1967⁴⁰ is considered an important historical moment in the history of Arabs, and it influenced the modern Arabic novel as much as the catastrophe of 1948 did. However, the difference this time around is that Arabs fought back against Israel, they took action to resist the occupation; they were no longer just observers. Consequently, this inflamed resistance in the Arab region, and sparked the resistance spirit, whether literary or politically.

Now everyone was involved. Everything thought or written about the war had the status of historical act; whether as a soldier, a writer, or an ordinary citizen, the Arab became part of a scene... the only progressive role to be played was that of an activist-author facing the Arab to recognize his role in the struggle.⁴¹

Many authors realised the importance of writing after 1967 in order to carry on the resistance project Arabs designed to be able to achieve liberation. Though this

³⁹ See B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders" in Palestinian Literature*, Social Text no.13/14, Duke University Press, Winter-Spring 1986, pp. 3-23.

⁴⁰ Also called the Six Day War June 1967 in which Israel decided to attack Egypt, this war resulted in the defeat of Arab armies led by Egypt's former president Gamal Abdul Nasser alongside Syria and Jordan, resulting in Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, Golan Heights and Sinai.

⁴¹ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 56.

historical moment ended with the defeat of Arabs, it signaled that unity amongst Arabs is possible. It indicated that there was no time for passive reactions and that the intellectual now has a moral and human role in this conflict. Thus, we find writings after the war of 1967 dealing with themes of hope and change. Before 1967, narratives focused on describing the passive Palestinian characters, such as Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* which will be analysed in the third chapter. In this novel, Kanafani's three characters Abu Qais, Marwan and Asa'ad are passive; they try to illegally run away from Palestine to Kuwait and their journey ends in their death, as described earlier, in a water-tank in the desert. The literal interpretation of the ending suggests that the three Palestinian characters lost their lives in silence, without even an attempt to knock on the walls of the water-tank; instead they die because they tried to escape their reality as opposed to facing it and trying to make a change. Death approaches them, and still they did not take any action of resistance, instead they surrendered to it.

In comparison, Kanafani's narrative *Umm Saad* (the mother of Saad), written in 1969, two years after the Six Days War, offers a new perspective on life through the Palestinian characters. This novel was written during the peak of the resistance. It takes place in a Palestinian refugee camp. Characters like the protagonist Umm Saad and her son who joins the freedom fighters are revolutionary. She is a mother who wants to make a change despite living the misery of the refugee camps.

In her article "*Opening the Borders*" in *Palestinian literature*, Barbara Harlow explains how the 1967 war dramatically altered the historical and political disposition of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. After the war, they were transformed from "exiles" into "dispossessed" subjects of an occupying state and its

military administration. Therefore, "opening the borders" was an opportunity for both the Palestinians who fled in 1948 and those who remained on the West Bank of Jordan proposed by Israeli occupation to revisit their past, but this exposed paradoxical images of what was a defeated dream and illusions.

2. Loss of Land and consequent search for an Identity in Narrative

This chapter analyses the influence of the loss of land on one's own identity. In this context, the development of the revolutionary character is examined in light of this process of the loss of land. Moreover, this chapter explores the character of the "other" in Ghassan Kanafani's narrative *Returning to Haifa*, in which the character of the Jewish is presented in a new perspective in Arabic literature. The journey taken in search of an identity in *Returning to Haifa* is a fundamental avenue in the exploration of the revolutionary character. Furthermore, the influence of power on a specific setting that falls under foreign domination will be investigated.

Ghassan Kanafani, was born on 12 April 1936 in Acre (Akka) and was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut by Israeli Mossad on 8 July 1972. His father was a lawyer, who sent Ghassan to the French missionary school in Jaffa. Ghassan Kanafani and his family were forced into exile during the *Nakba* 1948. He began writing short stories when he was working as a teacher in the refugee camps and soon became a writer and a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He attained many achievements as a writer and as a political activist. Nowadays he is considered a leading novelist of his era and regarded as one of the foremost Palestinian prose writers in the Arab world.

2.1. Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*: The search for an identity

Returning to Haifa, published in 1969, is one of the major works in the Palestinian Arabic literature of resistance. It represents Kanafani's ideological development and deep consciousness of the Palestinian case and its future. The short novel depicts the life of a couple (Said S. and Safiyya) that fled from Haifa in 1948 during the war with Israel or *Nakba*. The story is set during the days immediately following the June War of 1967 when the Israelis had just opened the border, the famous "green line" between Israel and what had become the "occupied territories" as a result of the war: Gaza. Until then, Gaza had been administered by Egypt, and the West Bank of the Jordan River, under Jordanian rule since its annexation by the Hashemite kingdom in 1950.⁴²

In the novel, on June 30, 1967 (almost 20 years since April 21 1948, when the couple fled by sea) they return to their house and hometown, Haifa. In the chaos of the escape, Said S. and his wife Safiyya had left their infant Khaldun in their home. They avoid talking about this tragedy. As mentioned previously, for 20 years the couple have not talked about Khaldun, their lost son, and Haifa. Yet, the idea of returning to Haifa constantly plays on their minds. In addition to the thought of returning to their home, the idea of searching for Khaldun, who may still be alive, still haunts them.

⁴² On the historical context, see also B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders" in Palestinian Literature*, pp. 3-23.

The narrative opens up with the couple approaching the gates of Haifa by their car. Twenty years have passed, and the Israeli government have now opened the borders allowing Palestinians to visit. When Said S. approaches his hometown, he feels a power that forces him to stay silent, but, at the same time, a pain increases inside. Said S. is a victim of war and he continues to suffer from this trauma, yet he keeps silent, as he is in denial in regard to the agony that he is experiencing. Said S. and Safiyya are not ready to talk about their tragedy yet.

When he reached the edge of Haifa, approaching by car along the Jerusalem road, Said S. had the sensation that something was binding his tongue, compelling him to keep silent, and he felt grief well up inside of him... throughout the entire journey neither of them stopped talking. Now, as they reached the entrance to Haifa, they both fell silent. At that moment they both realized that they had not spoken a word about the matter which had brought them there⁴³.

Since we come to the concept of trauma, an important question arises, what is the definition of trauma? Does it influence one's own identity? Does it contribute in shaping the identity more than it contributes to the loss of identity? What does a cultural trauma mean?

Trauma has become an essential theme discussed by many authors of the Palestinian literature of resistance. Also Palestinian cinema discusses trauma in many films that represent the Palestinian history. In her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth explains the ways in which texts of a certain period spoke about the story of traumatic experience but also

⁴³ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa*, pp. 149-150.

explored it in more depth. She argues that critics and psychologists agree that "trauma" means 'a wound' or 'an injury' inflicted on a body. Caruth continues to explain the term in regard to Freud, who understood it as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. Thus, a trauma is more than the simple illness of a, "wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available".⁴⁴

As a horrific event, trauma is indescribable in any familiar terms obtained through any past experience. Critics argue that trauma does not usually leave a physical mark on the surface or appearance of a person, it usually leaves a psychological wound.

In Gerts and Khleifi's words:

Trauma is such a severely horrific event that it remains unregistered by the consciousness, resisting the immersion into a sequential and causal story – whether a personal or a collective one. Trauma is indescribably in familiar terms derived from a known repertoire and, therefore, is unconnected to prior knowledge and does not become an integral link in a chain of events leading to the future. Ostensibly, it does not leave a trace. Yet, it still exists as a repressed memory, and as Freud has suggested, after a period of latency the repressed surfaces disturb and damage the possibility of experiencing the present, or of integrating into a causal sequence. Eventually, the trauma remains as a living event, enduring and unchanging, as if fully present rather than merely represented in memory. Trauma, as such, cannot be placed in a historical past that might have led into and shaped the present. The appearance of the traumatic event is not, at any rate, a return to what actually occurred, but a reliance on substitutes for it, a coming back to the actual, traumatic moment of loss, and also to what has been lost and is so difficult to let go of and so impossible to separate from. Thus, since the lost object lives in the consciousness as if it still exists

⁴⁴ C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 1996, pp. 1-4.

and because past events emerge in the present as if they perpetually reoccur, time stops. The past replaces the present and the future is perceived as a return to the past.⁴⁵

As the two characters, Said S. and Safiyya, arrive in Haifa, their memories return, especially Said S.'s memory, becomes active. For 20 years, they have been absent, both physically and mentally, in regard to the tragedy. As pointed out earlier in this research, the two characters have never spoken about their individual tragic experience; they have never conversed about their personal loss, while they have always talked about the collective loss of Palestinians and the collective loss of Palestine.

Memory did not return to him little by little. Instead, it rained down inside his head the way a stone wall collapse.⁴⁶

The decision to go back to Haifa was not easy for the couple, having suffered trauma of loss and fear of the past. The couple return to their home in Haifa, at noon on June 30, 1967, to find the house now inhabited by a Jewish couple (Miriam and Iphrat Koshen), who have raised Khaldun, whose name has become Dov. At this point, Said's identity is shaken by what he believed he once was and had, and by the reality he is now faced with and what that future might hold. The identity he believed

⁴⁵ N. Gertz, G. Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008, p. 3.

⁴⁶ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 149.

to be his was nothing more than an illusion; he has lost everything, even his identity, as a consequence of their defeat, yet, this awakening process that he undergoes aids him in restoring such an identity, one that could only be restored through resistance.

Ghassan Kanafani makes use of flashback techniques. This helps his aims to tell the story by the means of the suffering a character feels, after undergoing a traumatic experience. He moves us between scenes from the present and the past. For example, at his arrival to Haifa in search for Khaldun, the writer swiftly sweeps us back to the past using this flashback technique, and takes us back to the day in which the Palestinians were forced to leave their lands in the mass exodus and the inhabitants of Haifa were driven to the ports of the city. In the following scene, Kanafani transports us back to the present to discover that his house and his son are not what he expected, Khaldun now goes by the name Dov, and is an Israeli soldier, and his house is inhabited by a Jewish family. Amidst these confrontations of the reality of the present and dreams or illusions of his past, Kanafani also portrays an image of the future of Palestinians through the creation of a new generation of resistance, which is represented by Said's other son, Khalid, who wants to join freedom fighters and carry arms.

With that scene the terrible past came back to him in all its tumultuousness. For the first time in twenty years he remembered what happened in minute details, as though he were reliving it again.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p.153.

The new occupant of their house, Miriam, is acting as though the flat she has been living in throughout the years following 1948 is her legitimate home, while Safiyya and Said are surprised by the fact that this house, which is familiar to them, is now inhabited by this woman, and their own son Khaldun, has been raised as a soldier in the Israeli army. Miriam suggests that they give Dov or Khaldun the choice to choose his family. In a moment of vulnerability Safiyya utters that they shouldn't have left Khaldun, nor the house and Haifa, and it could be argued that she is using this rebellious tone to object what they were forced to do. By creating such images of confrontation between the two sides (Palestinian and Israeli) throughout the novel, Kanafani is confirming the provocative situation and people's rights to have a homeland while resisting and fighting to get it back.

Once, they heard a door slam, Safiyya looked at Said and said bitterly: as if she's in her own house! She acts as if it's her house!⁴⁸

Safiyya has yet to realise the extent of her loss: the loss of her son, and the loss of her home. She still believes that she is the only eligible person to be in this house, to move freely inside it, and to have the right to slam the doors as she pleases. This emphasises the loss of the freedom of movement for Palestinians after *Nakba*. Palestinians are not free to move in Palestine, they are deprived of the right to have their own homes back and move inside them as they wish. It is probable that the shock is too difficult to absorb: Safiyya is watching another woman acting as the

⁴⁸ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 171.

woman of the house in which she once lived with her husband, where she had her first, and now lost, son Khaldun/Dov.

Going back to Palestine enabled Said S. to see the truth. Living the past becomes a revolutionary act in itself, and he now hopes that his other son Khalid has joined the resistance movement while he was away. Although only humiliation and despair emerged from Said's vision of the past, Kanafani intended to show that though the past is gone, the future is ahead and shall be bright through resistance and organised liberation movements. Moreover, Said S. went back to his house in search of an identity he had lost the day he left Haifa and left his son. He finds his real identity in his son Khalid, who had tried to join the resistance movement, as he realised that Khalid knows and understands Palestine more than he does. Said now understands that they shouldn't have left home, he has to be strong now and face the future with more engagement in the resistance, because it's the only way to get back what was lost, whether his homeland or his Palestinian identity.

Said represents a weak generation responsible for the loss of Palestine. He, as many of his generation, was helpless; he did not take on a role to get his country back or to resist. For 20 years he did nothing to defend his country, other than weep over the lost land, his son and home. When Dov confronts Said with the past, and how helpless they were, Said says:

Men like Khalid are looking toward the future, so they can put right our mistakes and the mistakes of the whole world. Dov is our shame, but Khalid is our enduring honor.⁴⁹

Said's confrontation with Dov reveals his lack of political consciousness of the Palestinian cause at the time of his exodus from Haifa. However, his son Khalid represents a contrast, he reveals a better political consciousness, and he appears more politically mature than his father.

Because he lacked correct political consciousness and lived by defunct notions, Said could never translate his personal grievances into effective political actions. By contrast, his son Khalid, who has no direct personal experience of Haifa, and consequently no emotional or sentimental attachment to it, can commit himself to meaningful political action precisely because he possesses political consciousness. Now Khalid, it is quite obvious, is a representative of present (as well as future) Palestinian generations born in the diaspora after 1948.⁵⁰

Said's generation is trapped in the memories of the past. Said finds himself helpless, unable to take action toward changing reality or resisting the occupation. Khalid, on the other hand, has the correct political consciousness to join the resistance movement, as it is the only road toward responding to the occupation.

⁴⁹ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 187.

⁵⁰ I. Campbell, *Blindness to Blindness: Trauma, Vision and Political Consciousness in Ghassan Kanafani's "Returning to Haifa"*, , *Journal of Arabic Literature* (online), Vol. 32, No. 1, 2001, pp. 53-73.

Kanafani presents Dov as a symbol of the crime committed by Said's generation against Palestine whilst Khalid represents the new generation of resistance, the armed resistance ready to retrieve the lost land, and lost dignity, and so he is a symbol of the bright future and hope of Palestine. *Returning to Haifa* emphasises the importance of the resistance and fighting the battle. Barbara Harlow describes how *Returning to Haifa* is considered to be a new ideological framework for the Palestinian cause as Kanafani sees it, and how it changed the evolution of the Palestinian literature of resistance:

The narration of the Palestinian couple's return to Haifa complicated as it is in Kanafani's text by flashbacks, multiple perspectives, stream of consciousness and other storytelling devices, is conditioned by this devastating defeat in such a way as to provide an ideological framework for the critical re-evaluation of the Palestinian vision and the means to its realization... the question of armed struggle and the vision of the future of Palestine, vital to the resistance organization, were furthermore significant in informing the evolution of a Palestinian resistance literature and in theorizing its relation to the struggle for liberation.⁵¹

There were many challenges and transformations in the two years that followed the war of 1967 and the publication of narrative. A new popular Palestinian resistance movement emerged with a new strategy and set of goals to bring reformation to the resistance. One of the predominantly debated issues was the armed resistance, which had positive support from the PLO (Palestine Liberation

⁵¹ B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders" in Palestinian Literature*, pp. 3-23.

Organization). By wishing that Khalid had joined the freedom fighters, Said S., who Kanafani uses to express his own views, declares that armed resistance is part of the struggle for the Palestinian state. At the same time, the confrontation of two peoples suggests that Kanafani was using literature to propose a democratic solution for the future of Palestine. This confrontation reflects the ideological discussions within the resistance movements in regard to the "others" and the future of Palestine.

When Kanafani wrote *Returning to Haifa*, the Palestinian resistance movement had been created and was at its glorious peak of success, as it had yet to face any failure or loss. Thus, the narrative portrayed this stage of the Palestinian resistance. The writer, fully aware of the goals of this movement, reflected this in his writing and there is a clear parallel between what had happened in reality and the novel that he had created. The symbols he uses allow many interpretations, and allows it to be read at any point in time, as well as being relatable to any moment in history.

Forced exile imposes serious questions on identity and on the importance of preserving this identity in the absence of the physical presence of homeland. Some Palestinians who were forced to flee their homes and had lost everything recognise themselves as a combination of where they came from and where they find themselves, a mixture of loss and exile. Therefore, they are intrigued and burdened at times with the question of identity. Also, the constant attempts by the Israeli colonial forces to uproot the Palestinian people from their lands and homes render the question of identity more important. The uprootedness is part of the struggle of the Palestinians, uprooting the native Palestinians from their homes, uprooting their cultural heritage and uprooting their olive trees.

Identity – who we are, where we come from, what we are, is difficult to maintain in exile... we are "other" and opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement and exodus. Silence discretion veil the hurt, slow the body searches, soothe the sting of loss.⁵²

⁵² E. Said, *After the Last Sky: the Palestinian Life*, Random House, New York, 1986, p. 16.

2.2.The representation of the "other" in the Palestinian Narrative

Many Palestinian writers often highlight the importance of knowing the "other", in order to be informed about their culture. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, Palestinian writers find it compelling to investigate the Israeli or Jewish "other". In his *Conversations with Israeli and Palestinian Writers*, Runo Isaksen, attempts to find new perspectives of the "other" through both Israeli and Palestinian literature by interviewing writers from both sides. His key question in the book is: can literature play a role in helping one side to see the other? Ghassan Kanafani also believed that the intellectual plays a vital role in the conflict. It is the intellectual's obligation to be informed about the "other".

Darwish (Palestinian poet) has for many years highlighted the necessity of cultural dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians. "knowledge of the other 'i.e. the Israeli' is an indisputable cultural obligation. We have to know the Israeli in order to know how to compromise with him or how to fight against him. The image of the Israeli in the Arab consciousness is an abstract and prototypical one that is at odds with the requirements of cultural knowledge" he writes.⁵³

Some Palestinian intellectuals believe it is also important to know the "other" through literary representation, such as Salman Natour.⁵⁴ Natour emphasises that

⁵³ R. Isaksen, translated by Kari Dickson, *Literature and War: Conversations with Israeli and Palestinian Writers*, Olive Branch Press, Massachusetts, 2009, p. 190.

⁵⁴ Salman Natour is a writer, playwright and a journalist born in 1949. He has translated Hebrew literature into Arabic . He lives on Karmel Mountain.

literature could be considered as a tool for dialogue. In his book *Literature and War*, Runo Isaksen seeks answers from Natour on the role of literature in promoting dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. And Natour confirms that literature has a great potential in the Israeli-Palestinian situation; however, the political climate undermines the efforts of dialogue.

Extremely important. I am strongly in favor of translations, both ways. We should get to know each other better and better. Literature is a perfect way to do that, because literature allows you to have direct contact with the other side. It takes you into their society. Knowing the other side makes it possible to have dialogue. Literature is very different from the news on TV. Literature's task is to find another way in, because it cannot compete equally with television and the media. It has to start with something else, maybe a small detail, a girl's school book on the ground, something like that.⁵⁵

Although Natour encourages translations to know the "other", he points out the fact that more is translated from Hebrew into Arabic than the other way round.⁵⁶ This reflects that Israelis are not interested in Arabic or Palestinian literature.

In his study *Fi l-adab Al-Suhyuni* (On Zionist Literature, 1966), Kanafani examines the roles that Zionist literature played in the Israeli propaganda in the world. He asserts in his introduction that Israel made use of the literature as a weapon as much as it made use of political and military weapons.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ R. Isaksen, *Literature and War*, p. 199.

⁵⁶ R. Isaksen, *Literature and War*, p. 200.

⁵⁷ See G. Kanafani, *Fi l-adab Al-Suhyuni*, Muassasat Al-Abhath Al-'arabiyya, Beirut, 1966.

Palestinian narratives introduced the Jewish character in the Palestinian novel from the beginning. In his book *al-Shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-mu'asira* ("The Character in the Palestinian Novel"), Ayoub analyses the development of the Jewish character before and after the year 1967 (the year of the Arab *Naksa*).⁵⁸

Before 1967, Palestinian writers were influenced by the representations of the Jewish character in European literature. This Jewish character was known for its manipulation, deception, fraud in trade, exploitation of women and taking advantage of Arabs to achieve his interests.

Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* introduced two Jewish characters as human beings for the first time in Arabic literature. In art and literature, as mentioned before, there has been no attempt to show the human side of the Jewish character. However, Palestinian writers, unlike Israeli writers, did not fall into the trap of stereotyping the Jewish character, they depicted positive and negative characters, to the same degree as can be seen with the Arab characters; therefore, they did not portray an absolutely positive character with no defaults, on the contrary, they were self-critical. While in Israeli literature, the Arab Palestinian character is stereotyped as extremely negative, evil, violent, and ready to betray people to obtain money. On the other hand, the representation of the good Arab in Israeli literature is the character of the Arab collaborator with the Israeli occupation.⁵⁹

In his attempt to concentrate on the humanity of the Jewish characters, Kanafani links the suffering of the Palestinians caused by Israeli Zionists and the

⁵⁸ See M. Ayoub, *Al-shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-Mu'asira*, pp. 111-124.

⁵⁹ M. Ayoub, *Al-shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-Mu'asira*, p. 112.

suffering of the Jews by the Nazis. He does not justify Zionism; he simply unites the suffering of the Palestinians and the Jews, one human suffering is the suffering of all humans. Therefore, the "other" is just a reflection of one's suffering. In this narrative, the Arabic reader is introduced to a Jewish character and a survivor of the Holocaust for the first time. Both people, the Palestinians and Israelis, have experienced exile; however, Israeli people who were victims to Nazis are now victimizing the Palestinian people. Ironically, they don't seem to tolerate the existence of exiled people.

It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel and modern Zionism could not tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist alongside it – an intolerance constantly reinforced by the Israeli hostility to the nationalism of the Palestinians, who for forty-six years have been painfully reassembling national identity in exile.⁶⁰

As the Jewish couple arrives at Haifa for the first time, Kanafani draws the first sign of shaping the Jewish identity. Iphrat and Miriam stay at the Emigres' Lodge until Haganah militias take over the city of Haifa. It was a Saturday (Shabbat in Hebrew) when Iphrat and his wife went out of the lodge.⁶¹ There were no cars that Saturday morning. For the first time, this Jewish couple feel Jewish, which brings tears to their eyes as their Jewish dream of having a homeland is finally coming true.

⁶⁰ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 178.

⁶¹ Shabbat is the Jewish seventh day of the week. Religious Jews remember the Biblical creation of the heavens and earth in six days and the exodus of the Hebrews. To honor the day, work activities are refrained.

Furthermore, Iphrat justifies his presence on this new land as if it were a divine right, sacred as the Shabbat.

Iphrat stayed at the Emigres' Lodge... some began to go out on Friday, but he didn't go out until Saturday morning. He was immediately struck by the fact that he didn't see any cars. It was a true Jewish Sabbath! This brought tears to his eyes for reasons he couldn't explain... there is no longer a true Shabbath on Friday, nor a true one on Sunday.⁶²

According to Kanafani, one must show respect to others because they are human, and their religious views should not be a factor of division. Diversity should not divide people; each individual should value every human being. In *Returning to Haifa*, Kanafani was inspired by the revolutionist Marxist theory and this shaped his ideological development in writing. His writing developed between 1956 and 1960, specifically in the year 1962, in which his writings about Palestine represent Palestine as the world's center of suffering or a symbol of the suffering in the world, thus shedding a universal value on his characters and the events that take place in his novels. He was writing as if Palestine represents the universe, and so the problems of a certain Palestinian character become the problems of any human suffering the same conditions of life.

When Miriam cries on that Sabbath morning, she undoubtedly implies that Palestine would no longer celebrate Fridays or Sundays, the two days of worship for Muslims and Christians. The writer attempts to reveal the human side of the Jewish

⁶² G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 168.

woman who realises that Palestinians were driven out of their country so that Jews could have a homeland, thus there would be only Sabbath.

For the first time since his arrival, his wife had called his attention to something troubling... the signs of destruction that he began to notice took on another meaning, but he refused to let himself worry or even think about it.⁶³

Iphrat ignores the destruction caused by Haganah militias around him. However, this could be simply explained as follows: had the destruction of Palestinian communities not occurred, the Jewish would not have had homes. Kanafani highlights an important point which is the justification of the killing of other "Palestinians" in order for the Jewish to live, as though the pain they endured and suffered at Auschwitz justifies exerting oppression and suffering on others.

In his *Chronicles of Dissent* (1992), on Israel, the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism, Noam Chomsky explains that there is no justification in committing crimes and murders against Palestinians by justifying it with the Holocaust of Jews by the Nazi in Europe:

One very conservative and very honest Zionist leader, Nahum Goldman, who was the President of the World Zionist Organization and who was detested towards the end because he was much too honest -- they even refused to send a delegation to his burial, I believe, or a message. He's one of the founders of the Jewish state and the Zionist movement and one of the elder statesmen, a very honest man, he -- just before his death in 1982 or so -- made a rather eloquent and unusual statement in which he

⁶³ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 168.

said that it's -- he used the Hebrew word for "sacrilege" -- he said it's sacrilege to use the Holocaust as a justification for oppressing others. He was referring to something very real: exploitation of probably the world's most horrifying atrocity in order to justify oppression of others. That kind of manipulation is really sick.⁶⁴

In Kanafani's novel, there is a clear distinction between the Jewish man and the Jewish woman. This is evident when Miriam sees two men from Haganah militia carrying a dead body of a child she believed was an Arab child.

That was an Arab child! I saw it! And it was covered with blood!

How do you know it was an Arab Child?

Didn't you see how they threw it onto the truck, like a piece of wood? If it had been a Jewish child they would never have done that.⁶⁵

Miriam is more honest than Iphrat, she can sense the cruelty of the Haganah, and she even admits the Jewish discriminatory law and their growing sense of superiority over Arabs. After this scene, Kanafani takes us back to Auschwitz where Miriam's father was killed eight years prior, and she also witnessed the killing of her ten-year-old brother by the German soldiers. Kanafani employs this technique of comparisons, attempting to draw similarities between the crimes committed by the Haganah against Arab Palestinians and the crimes committed by German soldiers against the Jewish people in Europe. This technique provides an historical account of what could be considered as a justification of the presence of the Jewish couple on a

⁶⁴ N. Chomsky, *The Holocaust, and Anti-Semitism, excerpted from Chronicles of Dissent*, 1992, Comsky's website www.chomsky.info, retrieved: 22 May 2013.

⁶⁵ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 169.

stolen land, it provides Iphrat with justification for the violence, destruction and oppression exerted by Haganah. When Miriam expressed her desire to go back to Italy, Iphrat refused, and, instead, a few months later he comes back home with news of a new house with a five-month-old baby given to them by the Jewish Agency in Haifa. By this, Iphrat and Miriam are given more justification to stay on the land.

In *Returning to Haifa*, Kanafani expresses his sympathy with the Jewish people oppressed by the Nazi Germans, with the character of the Jewish "other". Kanafani defends the poor in his writings, particularly in this narrative, and he also shows respect and sympathy toward the Jewish, thus emphasising his ideological principles of standing by the oppressed and against the oppressor regardless the religious and geographical backgrounds; this is the universal messages that he never fails to deliver to his readers.

Kanafani's argument has two primary strategies: it contrasts the negative aspects of suppressing or ignoring past injustice with the positive aspects of confronting and articulating it in order to encourage this sort of reflection among the readers of *Returning to Haifa*, and it uses the analogy that the Israelis were to the Palestinians during and after 1948 as the Nazis were to the Jews in the Second World War in order to lend moral argument to armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.⁶⁶

The two characters in the *Returning to Haifa*, the Palestinian and the Jewish, are searching for traces of their own identity. The Jewish character finds it in the

⁶⁶ I. Campbell, *Blindness to Blindness*, p. 56.

stolen land from Palestinians, whereas the Palestinian character lost his identity the day he was forced to leave Haifa and his home and is now searching for it.

After 1967, a new character of the "other" merged in the Palestinian narrative. This character is the Israeli soldier. The Israeli soldier is the symbol and the image of the state of Israel, and they are found everywhere in the occupied territories: at checkpoints, in the streets, near schools and hospitals, and everyone is expected to obey the orders of the soldier. The soldier uses all the instruments of oppression against the Arabs. The character of the Israeli intelligence officer emerged after 1967, this character spied on Arabs, trying to seduce them with money, drugs and sex to force them to collaborate.⁶⁷

Many critics consider *Returning to Haifa* as the first fully developed portrayal of the Israeli in Palestinian literature. Barbara Harlow suggests that this narrative by Kanafani proposes "a radical formulation of the basis of a solution of the Palestinian issue, that of a democratic secular state".⁶⁸ Writers in the Arabic literature had not previously represented the life of the Israeli Jews now living on the land of Palestine.

⁶⁷ See M. Ayoub, *al-Shakhsiyya fi l-riwaya l-Filastiniyya l-mu'asira*, p. 112.

⁶⁸ B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders"*, pp. 3-23.

2.3. The development of a new revolutionary character in the Palestinian narrative

Another new character emerged in the Palestinian novel after 1967: a new revolutionary character. This revolutionary character is that of *Al-Batal Al-Muqawem* (revolutionary hero). In *Returning to Haifa*, Kanafani invites Palestinians to resist and carry arms, as the character Faris al-Lubda does in the novel. This episode in the novel reflects Kanafani's political and ideological thought. Although Faris initially appears to be an ordinary character, defeated just as Said S. was, he later manages to carry arms and fight for his right to return to his homeland and house.

Kanafani draws a new scene immediately after discovering that Khaldun/Dov will not recognise him as a father. In a flashback set in the afternoon, the writer takes us to Jaffa, where he introduces a new character "Faris al-Lubda". Faris rents a car from Jerusalem and goes to Jaffa to see the house from which he was expelled along with his family. Kanafani is depicting another Palestinian returning to his house after twenty years, however, this time, the house is inhabited by a Palestinian family.

I came to have a look at my house. This place where you are living is my house. Your presence here is a sorry comedy that will end one day by the power of the sword. If you wish, you can shoot me right here on the spot, but this is still my house. I've waited twenty years to return.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 176.

This contrast between the inhabitants of Said's house and Faris' house can be analysed as a provocative image for all Palestinians who lost their houses to return and resist. Faris, after twenty years, now carries arms to resist. Kanafani demonstrates that it is not a time to regret, weep and surrender; it is time to resist and eliminate fear to retrieve one's own house and land.

It is worth noting that on the arrival at their houses, each of the characters scan the houses to check if everything is still in its place, as if they recognise themselves in the objects they left. The writer shows the strong relationship between man and the possessions they lost. These objects, according to Said S., seem to recognise them more than the new inhabitants, particularly the Jewish inhabitants.

When Faris goes back to his house in Jaffa, he finds everything in its place, even the same smell, the smell of the sea, but what rooted him in one spot was the picture of his brother Badr hanging on the wall with a wide black ribbon across the corner of the frame. Badr joined the fighting in December 1947, and he was killed by a grenade that struck him on the road.

The picture of Badr in the house in Jaffa is very important to the Palestinian family resident in the house; they even name one of their children Badr. The picture has become a symbol of resistance; it enforces the roots of the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian cities. It is considered by the new residents of the house as a focal point of strength, a reminder of the right of Palestinians to return, therefore, the picture of Badr becomes part of the family, and the picture enlightens the family's life. The word "Badr" in Arabic language means full moon, and so it is as though Badr represents the light that is supposed to guide Palestinians back to Palestine, to defend their right to return, and to resist occupation.

The Palestinian man, who now inhabits the Lubda's house, comes from Jaffa and in the 1948 war a mortar shell destroyed his house. He was arrested when he returned to the city with the fighters. When he got out of the jail, he did not spot a single Arab man, and so he felt alone and isolated, but, still, he refused to leave the city.

When I saw the picture, I found consolation in it, a companion that spoke to me, to remind me of things I could be proud of, things I considered to be the best in our lives... it helped me not just to resist but also to remain. That's why the picture stayed here. It remained a part of our lives.⁷⁰

In this part of the novel, Kanafani provides another dimension to the loss of homeland: it is the life of the Palestinians who are internally displaced, who are seeking return within Palestine. In effect, they are refugees within the borders of their homeland, not abroad. Palestinians who become refugees on their own homeland suffer just as much as refugees suffer outside Palestine, as they too lost their homes.

This is highlighted in the interview "*The Internally Displaced: seeking return within one's own land*" with Wakim Wakim, a practicing lawyer, secretary and spokesman of the NGO Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced in Israel, where he explained how difficult it is for the internally displaced Palestinians to live in Israel, as it could possibly harm their memory of displacement and war:

⁷⁰ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 176.

Some of my relatives who have visited from Lebanon and the Gulf think that it might even be more difficult to be here and to have to see how everything has been transformed, to see what has happened to the old landscapes, the houses, the cemeteries of our mar-tyrs. Those who are far can keep the image imprinted in their memories before their displacement, and this is what they have passed along to their children. I remember how upset Ghassan Kanafani's son was when he came to visit a few years ago and discovered that Haifa was so densely built up with factories and all, whereas he had imagined it to be full of orange groves. So we took him north, near the Lebanese border, to the al-Bassa area, to Iqrit, Bir'im and Ma'alia, in other words, to where the landscape is still un-touched. There he felt that Palestine was still alive, and he said, "Now my soul has been returned to me."⁷¹

Faris takes the picture of his brother before he leaves. However, he feels it is wrong to take it from the Palestinian family; after all, Badr has become a part of their family. He returns to Jaffa and gives back the picture. The Palestinian man says:

I felt a terrible emptiness when I looked at the rectangle left behind on the wall... during the night I told my wife that if you wanted to reclaim him, you'd have to reclaim the house, Jaffa, us... the picture doesn't solve your problem, but with respect to us, it's your bridge to us and our bridge to you.⁷²

This emphasises the right to exist, because, as long as the picture is there, it is possible to return to reclaim it. This picture and the resistance of Palestinians

⁷¹ W. Wakim, *The "Internally Displaced": Seeking Return within One's Own Land*, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 31, No. 1, Autumn 2001, pp. 32-38.

⁷² G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 177.

strengthen their sense of belonging. The fact that the house still exists and survived the destruction shows that Palestinians can also stand strong and come back.

As previously stated, Said did not wish to go to visit Haifa, as he believes returning to their occupied city and house will be humiliating. He believes that Israel had opened the gates of the city so that Palestinians would feel defeated, guilty and inferior. The journey of the Palestinian couple takes place within a twenty-four hour time frame, from June 30 to July 1, 1967. However, as discussed previously, Said S. and his wife Safiyya relive the history of twenty years of separation and loss as the memories start flooding back. This journey registers a historical journey through crossing, not only the geographic borders between Israel and the occupied territories, but "crossing furthermore ideological and psychological barriers, barriers which have been erected in the service of maintaining an imperialist hegemony in the area with a Zionist Israel as its outpost and custodian of order".⁷³

When Faris takes his brother's picture down from the wall of his house in Jaffa, this confrontation with the picture of Badr, who was an ex-freedom fighter, makes him realise that this is not the solution. The solution is to face reality and fight to get his house, his land and the glory of his brother back, the glory of the Palestinian people. The solution is not taking the picture outside of the city, it is coming back, and so Kanafani invites Palestinians to fight, to carry arms, as exile is no longer a solution, and taking down the picture is like uprooting an olive tree and carrying it elsewhere outside one's homeland.

⁷³ B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders"*, pp. 3-23.

Faris and Khalid are the new revolutionary characters that emerged after 1967. They both acquire a political consciousness and join the resistance movement. The defeat of 1967 was shocking for all Arab writers, specifically Kanafani. However, they realised that the time for arms had come. *Returning to Haifa* primarily represents a novel of political dialogue, as characters represent a political point of view rather than developing as conventional fictional characters. This dialogue is based on the language of provocation to carry arms. It is represented in the dialogue between Said S. and his lost son Khaldun/Dov. Both characters represent the two sides of the conflict, with each character representing a political view. Through this dialogue, Kanafani attempts to answer questions on homeland and fatherhood.⁷⁴

As soon as Khaldun enters the house he calls on Miriam as “Mama!” and when Safiyya hears this she quietly holds back her tears. He comes into the room wearing a military uniform and only then does Said realise that Khaldun has become a soldier in the Israeli army. To his shock, Said leaps to his feet, while Safiyya turns away towards the window and hides her face with her hands, as though she refuses to accept reality and believes she is living a nightmare and if she covers her eyes she might wake up. Miriam presents Said and Safiyya, but Khaldun denies his original parents:

I don't know any mother but you. As for my father, he was killed in the Sinai eleven years ago. I know no others than the two of you.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See F. Wadi, *Thalath 'alamat fi l-riwaya l-Filistiniyya: Ghassan Kanafani, Emil Habibi, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra*, Al-mu'assasa l-'arabiyya Lil-dirasat wa-l-nashr, Beirut, 1981, p. 77.

⁷⁵ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 179.

Safiyya represents a general attitude held by Palestinians at the time: to deal with everything with emotions, so when she asks “don’t you feel that we are your parents?”, it is as if Kanafani is inviting Palestinians to stop the tears and encouraging them to resist dealing with events through emotions, as they do not solve any issue.

Dov starts speaking to his original parents as though he had prepared for this moment all his life, thus the dialogue between two ideologies, Dov’s side and Said’s side, begins:

When they told me I wasn’t their own child, it didn’t change anything... that my original parents were –Arabs, it didn’t change anything. Nothing changed, that’s certain. After all, in the final analysis, man is a cause.⁷⁶

Said S. comes to a better understanding for the meaning of his own cause. He discovers that his son Khalid knows his Palestinian cause and Palestine better than himself. Khalid is the cause.

Maybe your first battle will be with a Fida’i named Khalid. Khalid is my son. I beg you to notice that I did not say he’s your brother. As you said, man is a cause. Last week Khalid joined the fidayeen.⁷⁷

In this confrontation and dialogues between the Palestinian father and his lost son who became a Jewish Israeli soldier, Kanafani discusses a general feeling among

⁷⁶ G. Kanafani, *Palestine’s Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 181.

⁷⁷ G. Kanafani, *Palestine’s Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 182.

Palestinians: the image of Palestine for those who were forced to leave their homes, and the image of the new generation who had the belief and courage to retrieve what was taken away from them.

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 never have stopped trying to return... if I were you I would have borne arms for that... you are all weak! Weak! You are bound by heavy chains of backwardness and paralysis! Don't tell me you spent twenty years crying! Tears won't bring back the missing or the lost. Tears won't make miracles.⁷⁸

A technique that Kanafani uses in his narrative is to shift from addressing one person to addressing a group. Through his writing, Kanafani is addressing the Arab Palestinian community. He makes it clear that they were helpless for twenty years, but have fought to return and take back their lands. Kanafani also addresses the Jewish community:

My wife asks if the fact that we're cowards gives you the right to be this way... that doesn't justify anything for you, two wrongs do not make a right. If that were the case, then what happened to Iphrat and Miriam in Auschwitz was right... first you say that our mistakes justify your mistakes, then you say that one wrong doesn't absolve another. You use the first logic to justify your presence here, and the second to avoid the punishment your presence here deserves.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 185.

⁷⁹ G. Kanafani, *Palestine's Children Returning to Haifa*, p. 186.

The writer is now referring to the Holocaust, comparing it with the Palestinian *Nakba*; he is emphasising the fact that the weakness of others does not justify them taking the land and expelling its inhabitants outside of the country.

In fact, Palestinians and Arabs accuse Israel and Jews for ignoring their tragedy and suffering. Palestinians believe that Jews should sympathise more with them and feel their agony, as the suffering inflicted on Jews by Nazism is the same suffering inflicted on Palestinians from the Israeli Zionism. As mentioned before, Kanafani recognised the Jewish Holocaust through his representation of the character of Miriam and yet, he also criticises the attitudes of Zionist Israelis, who ignore the suffering of Palestinians.

As Aukje Kluge and Ben Williams write in *Rethinking the Holocaust through literature*:

The representation of Miriam stems from the awareness that the Nazi horrors indeed took place. She arrived in Haifa with her husband on the eve of the establishment of the state, and she is a decent, sensitive, and humane person. She is presented in contrast to the Israeli soldier...the equation of Zionism with Nazism was reinforced after the 1967 War with the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank...the European Left's criticism of Israel, and the 1975 UN Resolution, defining Zionism as a kind of racism, intensified the use of this motif (equation) for the delegitimization of Israel and Zionism... Arabs and particularly Palestinians accused Israel and Zionism of ignoring the Palestinian tragedy, despite what befell them in the Nazi era. Jews were expected to be more sensitive to the suffering of others since they themselves were subjected to horrible sufferings. Moreover, they believed that one wrong had been righted by another wrong.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ A. Kluge, B. Williams, *Re-Examining the Holocaust through Literature*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009, p. 76.

2.4. Cinema and resistance: historical background of the Palestinian cinema

In 1968 in Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) founded the unit of *Aflam Filasteen* (Palestine Films). This unit was founded by director Mustafa Abu Ali, photographer Hani Jawharia and cinematographer Sulafa Jadallah. Palestine Films included many young Arab filmmakers and directors, who devoted their work and life to the Palestinian struggle for freedom. They dedicated their films and documentaries to the just cause of Palestine, as a contribution to resistance. They attempted to tell the story of Palestine to document the events that shaped the Palestinian history. The founders were Arabs and many of them were exiled Palestinians and refugees. Their films were screened at regional Arab and international levels.

Black September events forced the PLO to leave Jordan, and so they settled then in Beirut.⁸¹ However, the cinematic unit continued its activities in Lebanon. More films were produced as new resistance movements emerged, such as People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The new resistance movements contributed to the creation of a new type of cinema: the revolution cinema.

Many films were produced in the 1960s in Syria because it had become an artistic, literary and political centre for Palestinians in the exile. At the same time, Syria also embraced the pan-Arabs movement which shaped a fertile intellectual and

⁸¹ Black September is the Jordanian Civil War which started in September 1970 and ended in July 1971. It was fought between the PLO and the Jordanian Armed Forces. This conflict was to determine Jordan's rule whether to continue under the Hashemite Monarchy or to be taken over by the PLO.

political environment for Arabs in general, but Palestinians in particular. The PLO Films Unit produced and documented revolutionary actions and resistance. It also documented life in the Palestinian refugee camps. Films on Palestine were awarded and screened at international film festivals at the time, such as the Leipzig International Festival for documentaries and short movies, the Palestine film in Baghdad, and many others. The unit also received artists and filmmakers from all over the world, such as Monica Maurer, a German filmmaker, who documented the life of Palestinians as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people. Maurer worked with the PLO Film Unit for twelve years.

The archive offered unremitting documentation of battles, bombings, political, cultural and social events, and interviews with politicians, military leaders, and notables from the cultural and intellectual circles of the time, many of whom have now passed away. In addition, it contained interviews with guests, documentation of delegations and receptions, a record of life in the refugee and guerrilla camps... the archive also offered originals and copies of all the movies made by the Film Institute, as well as close to one hundred films donated by friendly countries and by western directors.⁸²

It is worth noting that the Film Unit amazed the filmmakers around the world. The PLO managed to make films during the Palestinian resistance and, in the middle of the struggle, unlike revolution films in other parts of the world, such as in Iran or Cuba.

⁸² N. Gertz, G. Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, p. 28.

In 1981, the Palestinian archive was at risk, as a result of the Israeli aerial bombardment of Beirut and the continuous aerial to the PLO offices in the Al-Fakahani quarter. The unit decided to transfer and store all its films, documentaries and records, which amounted to thousands of films, in a rented basement in Sadat quarter of Beirut. However, after the Israeli invasion to Beirut in 1982, the PLO was expelled and the film archive disappeared and no one knows the fate of these valuable films that recorded the Palestinian history. Ever since, there have been many humble initiatives to find them, but no one knows if it was burned, lost or stolen.⁸³

⁸³ E. Jacir, *Palestinian Revolution Cinema Comes to NYC*, electronic intifada (website), 16 February 2007, www.electronicintifada.net, retrieved: 30 January 2015.

2.5. Kanafani and cinema: *The Survivor* and *Return to Haifa*

Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa* was adopted to film twice, both times in the Arab world. The first version, which carries the same title *Return to Haifa*, is faithful to Kanafani's original literary text, and was directed by the Iraqi filmmaker Kassem Hawal. The second was entitled *Al-Mutabaqi*, or *The Survivor*, and was directed by Seifullah Dad, an Iranian director, and it starred some famous Syrian actors and actresses.

The Survivor, produced in 1995, is based on the main plot of Kanafani's novel *Returning to Haifa*. It tells the story of the child left in his bed in one of the houses in Haifa and who is adopted by a Jewish family. However, the Iranian director makes a drastic change to the plot. The mother and the father were killed while they attempted to go back to their house to rescue their child during the Israeli military invasion. He also adds a new character to the story, the grandmother, who makes all efforts, including taking risks, to save the child from the Jewish family that settled in the house of the parents and adopted their child.

The two cinematic adaptations were made in different historical contexts of the Palestinian resistance. Hawal's film was produced almost at the same period of time in which the novel was written; therefore, it was faithful to the original text. The second one was produced in 1995, a period of defeat for the revolution. Therefore, the director made many changes throughout the text to correspond to the reality of revolution and defeat. Many critics saw a different ideology imposed by the Iranian filmmaker on the original text, an ideology which questions the position of the

Christians in the struggle, and which, therefore, contradicts with Kanafani's idea of a united Palestinian people.

Both *The Survivor* and the novel *Returning to Haifa* tell the story of the collapse of the Palestinian city Haifa in 1948, and both deal with the displacement of Palestinians from Haifa. Moreover, they both tell the story of a child abandoned by his parents during the attack on the city and who is adopted by a Jewish family that immigrated to Palestine and also took over the family's house. However, the film altered the rest of the events in the novel, and the following two examples highlight some of the drastic changes that were made. Firstly, the events of the film take place in 1948, while events in the novel take place in 1967 with flashbacks to 1948. Secondly, while Said S. and Safiyyah in the novel return to Haifa after twenty years searching for their child, in the film they both die as martyrs while returning for their child, therefore, the parents in the film did not leave Haifa as they did in the novel.

The Survivor was made with Iranian and Syrian production. The protagonist Said S. is a doctor whose life is threatened by the Israeli occupation, and his wife sends a letter to her mother-in-law, Safiyyah, to inform her of the danger surrounding her son in hopes of convincing him to leave Haifa and move to Gaza where they live. However, the following day, invasion starts, and, as a result, both Said S. and his wife are killed.

By ending the life of the parents, the director is suggesting to the audience that they did not abandon their son alone in the house, but died while trying to save the child. The director ends the twenty-year guilt that the couple had in the novel. It demonstrates the director's rejection of the way they left the child in the novel, a rejection of their defeat and silence.

Later in the film, Shimmoun, the Jewish officer responsible for the displacement of the Palestinians and the housing of immigrant Jews, takes away the child from the Christian family that took care of him and gives the child to a Jewish couple who arrived from Poland. The Jewish woman cannot bear children, so she was overwhelmed at the thought of adopting this child who is now with no family. They change the name of the child from Farhan to Moshe.

Seifullah Dad keeps some names in the film as they are in the novel; however, he plays with other names and characters. For example, Safiyya is no longer the wife of Said S., instead the name is given to that of his mother.

At this point in the film, Saffiya takes the responsibility upon herself to save the only survivor of her son's family, Farhan, her grandson. As mentioned previously, Saffiya did not exist in Kanafani's novel. As a grandmother, she plays the role of nanny for the child. She tries many times to take away the child, yet all her attempts fail. In the end, she takes a handbag that contains a bomb onto the train, and an Israeli officer recognises her and, so, she sacrifices herself to save the child. She jumps off the train, which has many Israelis on board, with the child in her arms, and, as the bomb explodes on the train, she closes her eyes and dies, while the child survives and cries out for rescue.

From a point of view of form, the film is considered a controversial one. Characters in *The Survivor* speak in both standard Arabic and dialect: the Jewish characters speak the standard Arabic, while Palestinians speak in dialect, which renders the conversations inconvincible. As for the clothing, the way characters are dressed differs to the traditional clothes of Haifa and its inhabitants, which is irrelevant to the place and time of the events. It is unquestionable that the level of

production is very high for *The Survivor* which is an advantage for the film; yet, critics see that this does not justify the poor creativity in a film in comparison with the original literary text.⁸⁴

As for Hawal's *Return to Haifa*, shooting the film took place in the Lebanese mountain town Ihden, in the northern part of the country and in the Baddàwi refugee camp in Tripoli city, where thousands of Palestinians were living. As for the internal scenes, they were all produced in the Syrian cinema studios in Damascus. This film is one of the major and most important films produced during the Palestinian resistance and funded entirely with Palestinian money collected by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The crew of the film was international, all working together with the Palestinians. For example, the director was Iraqi; the first actress Hafan Al-Hajj is a famous Lebanese actress and she played the role of Safiyya; Cristina Schaur, a German actress, played the role of Miriam, the make-up artist was Russian. Also, although some scenes required high budgets to shoot, the film managed to produce these scenes with a very limited budget.

The most important scene in the film is the one depicting the day in which the Palestinians were forced to leave Haifa in masses. The Palestinian armed resistance was in Lebanon at the time Kassem produced the film, and so the film was also considered an act of resistance. In this scene, thousands of Palestinians from the Baddàwi refugee camp participated, alongside Lebanese. Many of them were the

⁸⁴ See F. Wadi, *Ghassan Kanafani Mujadadan Ala Al-Shasha ("Ghassan Kanafani Again in Cinema")*, Nizwa online, issue 11, <http://www.nizwa.com/>, retrieved: 20 September, 2015.

same Palestinian refugees who were forced to leave Haifa in 1948. Therefore, people who acted in this scene were not simply acting, they were reliving a traumatic moment again. Thus the crying in this scene is sincere and true as it comes from people who had experienced it or whose parents had. It is reported that an old man who participated in the scene died during the shooting as a result of having to re-enact this traumatic event of his life.

The costumes and clothes were all authentic, traditional Palestinian dress. Palestinians in the refugee camp who participated in the scene of the exodus wore the same clothes they had on when they had been forced out of Haifa. Therefore, Hawal succeeded in transferring the same emotion Kanafani had in his novel into this particular part of the story. Hawal's cinematic adaptation is to a large degree faithful to *Men in the Sun*, despite the limited budget and strict production.

The film is faithful to the novel in that it follows the story: it tells the tragedy of the Palestinian inhabitants of the Haifa city in 1948 who were forced to leave their houses and properties. It also tells the tragedy of the Jewish people under the Nazi regime and the horrors of Auschwitz. The film's importance is also due to its recognition of the novel as a document which recognises the Jewish tragedy.

In both the film and the novel, we follow the story of the Palestinian family who were forced out of their houses by the new armed Jewish militias, and lose their five-month old child during the chaos. Meanwhile, a Jewish family from Poland occupies the Palestinian family's house after they escaped Auschwitz.

Kassem Hawal met Ghassan Kanafani for the first time in 1969 in Beirut. The Iraqi director was heading to Abu Dhabi in United Arab Emirates at the time for

work; however, Kanafani convinced him to stay in Beirut and work for his magazine *Al-Hadaf*. Kanafani had a positive impact in Hawal's cinematic career. Kanafani encouraged the director to produce Palestinian films for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.⁸⁵

As mentioned before, the film opens with the exodus scene. The Palestinians who inhabited Haifa City were, by means of arms and force, thrown into the sea. The film portrays the horror of that day. Most of the actors and actresses who participated in this scene were Palestinians, who experienced the traumatic exodus that day. We could see the terrifying looks on the faces of the women and children, the chaos that surrounded them, which was intensified by the sound of bullets and bombs which drove the masses of inhabitants to the sea.

The music in the film was granted to the director by the famous Lebanese musician Ziad Rahabani, and it was a powerful contribution to scenes such as the exodus and the drive by car to Haifa. As mentioned before, in regard to the setting, the scenes were shot in Tripoli, and the zone was reserved for the shooting, and the inhabitants collaborated in the making of the bombing scenes and kept the streets empty except for the actors. They made a lot of changes to Tripoli airport to ensure it looked like Haifa harbor. Many Lebanese fishermen gave their fishing boats to the director to shoot the scene.

In an interview with Kassem Hawal, which he gave in London in 2008, he explained the limited budget he had for the shooting. However, he received donations

⁸⁵ See B. Ibrahim, *"A'id ila Haifa" ma bayna l-filmayn ("Return to Haifa in two films")*, 6 August 2015, on www.doc.aljazeera.net, retrieved: 15 September 2015.

from many supporters of Palestine which contributed in realising the project. In addition, the courage of the inhabitants of the camps in Tripoli encouraged him to go on. He held training sessions for the inhabitants for two months in order for them to prepare for the shooting of the exodus scene from Haifa. Hawal also described the risks they took for shooting the scene: it was shot at five in the morning with three thousand people, with some British boats, and this required a lot of attention and punctuality in order to finish the scene in two hours, along with some shots taken from an aircraft.⁸⁶

From a technical point of view, the shooting of the exodus scene is similar to those in documentary films. In fact, the film is considered as an important documentary film for the Palestinian exodus. It is considered authentic due to the beforementioned number of participants who experienced the trauma of the exodus themselves. It documented the humane and historical dimensions of the Palestinian tragedy.

It is necessary to note that it is considered difficult to adapt this literary work to film because it is based on philosophical and political contexts of the events of 1948, and these are portrayed through dialogues between characters rather than actions. These difficult contexts are the questions of identity, of raising a child, of homeland, of the Palestinian identity and of existence; however, despite these difficulties, Hawal managed to produce the first Palestinian narrative film.

⁸⁶ See O. Mahdi, *Screening Qasem Hawal's Return to Haifa in London*, 25 April 2008, on www.elaph.com, retrieved: 5 August, 2015.

On the other hand, according to some critics, the director's vision did not give the *Nakba* of 1948 its convincing horrific dimension. However, the mass efforts of many popular and official fronts with limited budget and resources are not to be underestimated in the creation of this important cinematic documentation of the *Nakba*. Furthermore, the film by Kassem Hawal contributed to the establishment of a Palestinian cinema regardless of all the limitations the director faced back then.

This is an important historical document because it portrays the horrors of the Palestinian exodus in 1948 from Haifa. The sound of bullets intensifies with the shouting voices of traumatic women and children. They are directed to the sea, looking for boats to board, though not everyone was lucky enough to get on one of them. Many of these boats did not make it and sank. The film also shows the fleeing of the British forces on a boat waving the British flag. This indicates that Palestinians were expelled by the Jewish militias who were, at the time, in collaboration from the British forces. They left the Palestinians isolated and in the hands of new armed Jewish militias, who will later declare the establishment of Israel on the Palestinian territories.

Following the exodus scene is the scene portraying Said and Safiyya after 20 years in their house in Ramallah in Palestine 1967. They now have two children, Khalid and Khalida, who are sitting and reading about the Palestinian cause in the newspapers. Khalid is determined to join the freedom fighters, but when he proposes this to his father, he does not approve and tells him that he has already lost a lot and he is not willing to lose his son. This is an important conversation that highlights themes which will be dealt with throughout the film, and which will shed light on the Palestinian struggle between the past, present and the future. The scene finishes with

Safiyya asking Said to go back and see their house in Haifa as borders are open for them to visit.

It is important to note that the inhabitants of Haifa were forced to leave their houses because they feared for their lives. As a matter of fact, *Nakba* is considered a process of dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and it dates back before the first massacres on 5 December 1947 and continue to happen today. One of the most horrible massacres was the Deir Yassin Massacre which happened on the tenth of April 1948. This was a massacre of Palestinians by the Zionist militias, and the horrible news of the massacre spread across Palestine. Therefore, this news drove more Palestinians out of their houses, especially as it was the same Zionist militias that were threatening, terrorising and forcing them to leave their houses. The film portrayed the terror they experienced when the Zionist militias threatened them by means of force and arms.

The second most important scene in Hawal's film is Faris Al-Lubda's return to his house in Jaffa. This scene uses flashbacks, the same important technique as used in the film just as in the novel. In this scene, the film takes us back to the time when Faris' brother got killed while fighting for his homeland. After this flashback, Faris arrives to the house he was forced to leave with his family; however, as in the narrative, the house is inhabited by a Palestinian family. As in the novel, this new family has not made any changes to the house, they have kept the photo of Badr, Faris' brother, on the wall as they consider it a symbol of one of the heroes of their homeland, a symbol of resistance, thus, again, as in the novel, the photograph belongs to all Palestinians, not only to Badr's family.

The new inhabitant in the Al-Lubda house speaks of the torture he faced in the Israeli prison and his decision to stay on his land, as he would rather die than leave. He believes that he should stay; just as the photo of Badr, they all belong to that land. He adds that the exiled Palestinians should return and resist the occupation rather than uproot the symbol of resistance, like the photo of Badr. Accordingly, Hawal emphasised the importance of resistance, taking action rather crying over the lost. He managed to portray the necessity to act and take a role in the resistance movement. By the end of the film, we see Faris taking a leading role in recruiting young Palestinians for the resistance movement, and one of the recruits is Said S.' son Khalid. Through this scene, the director delivered Kanafani's message regarding the importance of acting and taking part in the resistance of the people. The message is made more powerful by the Palestinian flag being raised in the recruitment camp.

The scenes in the film follow the same sequence of events in Kanafani's narrative. The audience see how Said S. drives all the way to Haifa, and the issues he brings up in the car with Safiyya. He talks about the humiliation of returning, and the occupation's aims at degrading Palestinians through opening these borders. Said knows that opening the borders is part of the psychological war, as the occupation intends to show them the development they brought to the Palestinian lands, to make Palestinians feel worthless and inferior. He knows that he is not free, because a freeman gets to see his land; however, in his case, the occupation forces allowed them to go in and see it after twenty years - he did not even have the choice before and will probably not have afterwards.

The central idea of the film revolves around the two tragedies: the Jewish tragedy in Europe and the Palestinian tragedy on the now occupied Palestinian

land. The film combines fictional and documentary styles, which adds a creative dimension to the production. The director inserts scenes from a documentary about Hitler and the Nazis, which offers more sympathy to the Jewish people, in order to demonstrate their tragedy to the audience. We also follow the story of the Jewish woman Miriam whose younger brother gets shot and killed in front of her eyes by Nazi soldiers. The Nazi soldiers kill the boy in cold blood and leave him thrown on the doorway of Miriam's house. We then see the arrival of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine, including Miriam and her husband, and upon her arrival she sees the Zionist militants who throw the corpse of a boy in the back of their truck. This brings about the comparison between Nazism and Zionism - they are two faces of the same coin. Both are brutal and inhumane, both Jewish people and the Palestinians are victims of Nazism and Zionism. However, the Jewish people who arrive in Palestine were manipulated by the Zionist propaganda of "a land with no people, for a people with no land". On the ship that carried the Jewish immigrants, we hear a conversation between some of the immigrants who have hopes of planting and constructing the country they dream of, not knowing what is waiting for them there. After their arrival, some of them question the slogan "land with no people" as they see buildings, cities and a life already constructed there, and they start questioning the fate of the inhabitants of these cities.

It was obvious to some of the Jewish immigrants that these cities had a people that built it; however, the officials did not make any statement over the truth of the former inhabitants. When one of the Jewish immigrants starts to speak up about this issue, , asking where all the Arabs go, he gets shot and killed, which can be interpreted as a symbol of killing the truth. The film shows that Nazis killed Miriam's

family in front of her eyes, but it is no different than the Zionists who caused the exodus of Palestinians and killed the little Arab boy who was thrown onto the back of the truck.

According to Kanafani as well, the similarities between the Jewish tragedy and the Palestinian tragedy are essential to understanding the essence of the conflict. The argument that goes between Said S. and the Jewish woman Miriam reveals this basic idea that both the Jewish people and the Palestinians had to go through many injustices and killings. However, it is not possible to comprehend how the victims turned into oppressors.

The final scene is the confrontation between the family members: Said S., Safiyya and Khaldun, now called Dov. The confrontation reveals many fundamental questions, such as discussed before. When Dov first arrives at the house, he enters the living room in his uniform - a soldier in the Israeli army. The image of Dov in his uniform struck Said and his wife. At this moment, through flashback, Said remembers his father who was killed in Sinai in 1956 defending the land, a victorious death that brought a sense of pride to the family. However, seeing Dov now in the Israeli army uniform symbolises the shame, as this same uniform caused the occupation of Palestine, the killing of a lot of Palestinians and it is responsible for their exile. Seeing Dov in this uniform, Safiyya almost loses consciousness as she remembers that humiliating day in which they were forced to leave their houses and the city. This is a very powerful scene in the film; however, many critics agree that it did not give the philosophical dimensions intended in Kanafani's novel. The film ends with the recruitment of Khalid in the resistance movement, in which Faris Al-Lubda is the leader of the young recruits who prepares them for the future of Palestine.

3. Exile in Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* and Tawfiq Salih's *Al-Makhduun*

This section deals with the concept of exile as suggested by Ghassan Kanafani. In addition, it offers a deeper perspective to the concept of home in Kanafani's novel and Tawfiq Salih's film.

Kanafani makes a clear distinction between exile literature and literature that has been produced under occupation. In his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine between 1948 and 1966*, Kanafani's distinction presupposes a relationship between a common land, common identity and a common cause. Based on this relationship, it is possible to recognise the difference between the two forms of political and historical existence: occupation and exile. This distinction presupposes an occupier, who has either exiled or occupied a group of people, which, in turn, has significantly influenced the literary and cultural development of the people they have exiled and whose land they have occupied. Literature, in other words, is implicated in struggle.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ B. Harlow, *Return to Haifa: "Opening the borders" in Palestinian Literature*, pp. 3-23.

3.1.Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*: Characters of exile who are trapped between reality and illusion

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.⁸⁸

Palestinians were forced into exile after 1948, thus leaving their native lands. They were displaced from their own houses, cities, villages and all familiar native geographic lands. Kanafani in this narrative suggests another aspect: a voluntary exile in which the three characters dream of a life in exile that could represent their salvation, which we find, at the end, were nothing more than illusions.

Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun* takes as its central issue a further phase of that exodus and consequent exile, the Palestinians' search for employment and livelihood in the traditionally conservative but oil-rich Arab states of the Gulf.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ E. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p 173.

⁸⁹ B. Harlow, *History and Endings: Ghassan Kanafani's Men in the Sun and Tawfiq Salih's The Duped*, *Minnesota Review*, no.25, fall 1985, p. 102.

Men in the Sun, published in 1963, is Kanafani's first novel and in which he portrays the reality of exile. In this narrative, he shows that the illusions of Arabs in the 1950s with dreams of a land far from their homeland Palestine are pointless; he defies these illusions by ending the story with a tragedy (the death of the three men suffocating inside a water-tank):

The thought slipped from his mind and ran onto his tongue: "why didn't they knock on the sides of the tank?" he turned right round once, but he was afraid he would fall, so he climbed into his seat and leaned his head on the wheel. "why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you say anything? Why".⁹⁰

By choosing a tragic ending, Kanafani offers an unquestionable principle of resistance: that resistance takes place on one's own homeland, not in seeking exile and fortune. The ending suggests that hardships inside the refugee camp are part of the struggle and resistance.

We follow the story of three men who try to escape from the refugee camp life to Kuwait looking for wealth. However, they choose an illegal way to enter Kuwait by being smuggled in from Iraq. Finally, they arrange to travel with a water-truck driver (Abul Khaizaran) who, in exchange for money, offers them a ride in the back of the truck across the desert on their way to Kuwait. At several check points, the men hide in a large, empty, water tank in the cruel mid-day heat as the driver arranges paperwork to get through. After going through the final check point, not a great

⁹⁰ G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, translated by H. Kilpatrick, Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1999, p. 74.

distance from the men's ultimate goal in Kuwait, the driver opens the tank with the intention of letting the men out, only to find they have died.

The sudden delay in the paperwork on the last checkpoint led to the death of the three men. None of the three men shouted or knocked on the tank to be rescued or freed. Kanafani portrays the three characters under a negative light, helpless and defeated, due to the loss of their identity and sense of belonging in the events that took place in Palestine and due to the hardships of life as refugees.. In this context, Kanafani reveals that those who try to escape from their homeland face only death, and Kanafani stresses the importance of fighting all hardship, and taking part in forms of resistance and revolution to find one's own identity rather than escaping.

Kanafani was an exile himself. His writing is influenced by the reality of exile that he experienced. However, he used exile as a tool to regain his freedom from which he was deprived. Andrew Gurr defines the exile from a revolutionary perspective. He describes them as a bird that is forced to fly away; however, this bird experiences bitter longing to return.

The exile on the other hand is like a bird forced by chill weather at home to migrate but always poised to fly back. He is political in that he has suffered the chill of official displeasure in some form or other, or at least he feels unwelcome, and waits for the weather to change. The political revolutionary does the same, but less passively or privately.⁹¹

⁹¹ A. Gurr, *Writers in Exile: The Creative Use of Home in Modern Literature*, The Harvester Press, Brighton, 1981, p. 18.

Barbara Harlow brings up an important point about the writer's preoccupation with the necessities of the present, particularly the reasons compelling writers like Kanafani to produce and write. According to Fadl Al-Naqib, Kanafani's friend and critic, ambitious and aspiring writers write to publish and build their lives as they wish. However, Kanafani wrote in an "everyday fashion... what he wrote today he wrote to be published tomorrow... Kanafani, a journalist as well as a novelist, lived without dreaming. His works, however, are not without vision, and his critique of the contemporary Palestinian reality is directed at the futile passivity of its dreams".⁹²

The tragic ending of the novel, and the question "why didn't they knock on the walls of the tank" are both seen as controversial by readers and critics. Some read the ending literally, i.e. three Palestinians who attempted to escape died in silence without even knocking on the walls of the tank while dying and suffocating in silence. However, others interpreted it in a different way: the three men actually tried to knock, though the reader has no indication of whether they did knock or not, only Abul Khaizaran's question of why did not they knock. According to Fadl Al-Naqib, the question of whether they knocked or not is an ignorant one. It also ignores the historical context of the narrative:

There is no doubt that the three men did knock on the walls of the tank. They shouted, called for help and did everything in their power to save their lives. They did what any man would do who still clings to life. The three finally suffocated, not because they didn't bang on the walls of the tank, but because there was no one there to hear them, and even if someone did hear them, he wouldn't have taken it upon himself to

⁹² B. Harlow, *History and Endings*, p. 104.

help them. Nonetheless the question is a real one and in the future will become an important one in that it represents the way in which the Arabs have dealt with the tragedy. We always predict a tragedy before it happens, and we are always surprised when it finally does occur. ‘‘why didn’t they bang on the walls of the truck?’’ will become one of the important questions in Arabic literature.⁹³

The question ‘‘why didn’t they knock on the walls of the tank?’’ was raised in the novel by Abul Khaizaran, the smuggler. But is he a reliable character? Did Kanafani give any indication regarding how trustworthy Abul Khaizaran is? Since Abul Khaizaran represents the Arab leaderships, should we believe what he says? Kanafani always criticised the Arab leaderships for their betrayals to the Palestinian people.

Ghassan Kanafani portrays all the miseries of exile in his novel *Men in the Sun*. According to the writer, all desperate attempts to escape reality must end with failure. However, it reveals that "escape" is not the solution. Many critics consider *Men in the Sun* as transitional phase between exile and the Arab conscious resistance. Accordingly, this novel is revolutionary in its historical dimension. It also emphasises the concept of "return" rather than escape from the reality of the occupation and the refugee life.

None of the four wanted to talk anymore, not only because they were exhausted by their efforts, but because each one was swallowed up in his own thoughts. The huge lorry was carrying them along the road, together with their dreams, their families, their hopes and ambitions, their misery and despair, their strength and weakness, their

⁹³ B. Harlow, *History and Endings*, p. 107

past and future, as if it were pushing against the immense door to a new, unknown destiny, and all eyes were fixed on the door's surface as though bound to it by invisible threads.⁹⁴

It is clear in this part of the novel that Kanafani is pointing out that a road toward the unknown leads to misery and despair. Furthermore, he underlines the lack of understanding about the reality of refugees. In order to fight the Israeli occupation, it is necessary to establish a common understanding of resistance.

The constant humiliation that Palestinians faced on a daily basis in Palestine or in refugee camps led to the loss of their Palestinian identity. According to Kanafani, regardless of the constant humiliation that the revolutionary characters withstand, they persevere to maintain their identity. Moreover, this narrative reveals the risks and the dangers of each character's journey toward the Palestinian's self-salvation. Kanafani shows that the individual escape from camp is the beginning of the collective death of the Palestinians. The desert symbolises thirst and death while the water tank represents the destiny of Palestinians and the Palestinian existence.⁹⁵

Men in the Sun represents the period of time in which Palestinians were defeated by Israeli occupation. At the same time, it represents the disappointment of Palestinians towards other Arab leaderships. Kanafani's character Abul Khaizaran, the driver, represents the Arab leadership who are looking for wealth and materialistic possessions or high-rank positions which led their people to the abyss. In the story this character is sexually impotent. Just like Arab leaders and armies that are usually

⁹⁴ G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, p. 63.

⁹⁵ See E. Khoury, *Al-Dhakira Al-Manfquda*, Muasasat Al-Abhath Al-Arabiyyah, Beirut, 1982.

lustful for war and battles, these Arabs are now impotent to fight back and resist occupation, and, therefore, the loss of manhood symbolises the loss of land.⁹⁶ The story was written for those who seek escape from reality rather than facing it. It shows that those who run away from death end up on a deadly road.

Now... ten years had passed since that horrible scene. Ten years had passed since they took his manhood from him, and he had lived that humiliation day after day and hour after hour. He had swallowed it with his pride, and examined it every moment of those ten years. And still he hadn't yet got used to it, he hadn't accepted it. For ten long years he had been trying to accept the situation? But what situation? To confess quite simply that he had lost his manhood while fighting for his country? And what good had it done? He had lost his manhood and his country, and damn everything in this bloody world.⁹⁷

Abul Khaizaran reflects on the uselessness of the Arab leaderships. They lost their own dignity when they lost Palestine. They are powerless just like Abul Khaizaran, who tries to live with his impotence and loss of dignity. Abul Khaizaran is a selfish man, a gold-digger who is only interested in money. He represents a man who cannot defend his own land and people. Kanafani could not have chosen a better image than a man who has lost his manhood to depict such a character. Abul

⁹⁶ See G. Shukri, *Adab Al-Muqawamah*, 1970.

⁹⁷ G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, p. 53.

See also: G. Kanafani, *Rijal fi al-shams*, in *al-Athar al-kamila*, p. 110.

"عشر سنوات وهو يحاول أن يقبل الأمور، ولكن أية أمور؟ أن يعترف ببساطة بأنه قد ضيع رجولته في سبيل الوطن؟ وما النفع؟ لقد ضاعت رجولته وضاع الوطن وتباً لكل شيء في هذا الكون الملعون".

Khaizaran takes advantage of poor and weak people. He makes his money by abusing weaker people, such as these three passengers:

Shall I tell you the truth? I want more money, more money, much more. And I find it difficult to accumulate money honestly. Do you see this miserable being which is me? I have some money. In two years I'll have everything and settle down. I want to relax, to stretch out, to rest in the shade, thinking or not thinking. I don't want to make a single movement. I've had more than enough exhaustion in my life. Yes indeed, more than enough.⁹⁸

Men in the Sun reveals the cruelty of exile in all its shapes and forms. The story is a form of self-criticism towards Palestinians who are taking on negative roles in the Palestinian tragedy. Kanafani stresses the fact that there is no shortcut for those who want to find one's own identity. The fact that the three men never shouted to be freed or released reflects how Palestinians did not have any choice in their own self-determination at that moment; they were weak, helpless and resigned. In *Rethinking the Nakba*, Elias Khoury suggests an element of muteness in the case of the three Palestinian men who did not shout to be released. The narrator of *Men in the Sun* ends the story with Abul Khaizaran shouting "why didn't they shout!". But, in the future, we know that this silence will eventually end and Palestinians will regain their voice

⁹⁸ G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, p. 56.

See also: G. Kanafani, *Rijal fi al-shams*, in *al-Athar al-kamila*, p. 114.

"أقول لك الحقيقة؟ انني أريد مزيداً من النقود... مزيداً من النقود... مزيداً من النقود... ولقد اكتشفت أنه من الصعب تجميع ثروة عن طريق التهذيب... أترى هذا المخلوق الحقيّر الذي هو أنا؟ انني أمتلك بعض المال وبعد عامين سأترك كل شيء وأستقر... أريد أن أستريح... لا أريد أن أتحرك قط".

and speak up after the traumatic event of *Nakba*.⁹⁹ However, the novel does not yet offer a positive solution to the misery and suffering of the Palestinians. At this point, they are still suffering from this trauma; they want to escape it since they failed to resist.

Kanafani demonstrates the trauma that surrounds the lives of the refugees through three characters from three generations. Their common goal is to escape the oppression and hardships in their occupied homeland or the hardship in their forced refugee life to seek better work opportunities, and to make a fortune and the place they choose is Kuwait. Kanafani wrote Abu Qais as the oldest character, who, as mentioned before, seeks a new life to support his family, which consists of his wife, son and a newborn. While Marwan is the youngest character, and he attempts to escape in order to support his mother and siblings, to prove to his father that he can support the family better than he did, and to prove to everyone that he is the man of the house now. As for Assad, he represents the middle generation, and he is a determined, strong man. The three characters are connected through Abul Khaizaran, the smuggler who is to successfully transport them to Kuwait at a price.

Home is one of the most significant themes Kanafani discusses in his stories and novels. In *Men in the Sun*, "home" is under the rule of an occupier, a colonising rule which is Israel. Although "home" is not described in full details in the novel, it is represented and portrayed as a home of hardships and oppression from which the three characters attempt to escape.

⁹⁹ E. Khoury, *Rethinking the Nakba, Critical Inquiry*, vol. 38, no. 2, The University of Chicago Press, winter 2012, pp. 250-266.

In this context, opportunity is significant: the three characters seek "opportunity" elsewhere because they were deprived from fair and equal opportunities in their homeland. They were frustrated that their home was occupied by Israel; the occupation deprived them from their basic needs of equal opportunities of work, and so now they seek such opportunities in Kuwait by escaping their home. They are desperate to have a better life, and so, consequently, they turn to smugglers who take advantage of the desperation and poverty of Palestinians. The hope for equal work opportunities pushes the three characters far from their homeland where they are treated as inferiors by the Israeli colonisers.

The men's destination is an illusion: they hope to achieve the social, economic and psychological balance that they lost in their homeland. According to Kanafani, all relationships can be represented by the attachment between the Palestinians and their land. He sees homeland as the place where a Palestinian life should begin and where it should end. All things start from the idea of the homeland and ends there. Even in exile, homeland should be carried in the memory of the Palestinians when they are displaced. A burning longing to the lost land accompanies them wherever they go. So "homeland" is the central destination of the Palestinian journey.

All actions, dreams, ambitions or fears are centered around the love and the attachment to one's land, even in death or on one's death-bed. Death becomes pointless and meaningless if it happens while attempting to escape home, just as the miserable death of the three men in *Men in the Sun* who died in silence. They lived an illusion of a land that could have replaced their homeland, but, instead, died with helpless arms that could not even knock on the walls of the tank to liberate

themselves. This illusion of a land in exile, or "*ghurbah*", has become the graveyard of the men.¹⁰⁰

The "journey" is also an essential theme in Palestinian literature. In *Men in the Sun*, the symbolism of the Palestinians' journey in the desert is the need to face life regardless of its hardship instead of trying to escape it.

Kanafani revolutionised the Palestinian narrative with *Men in the Sun* in both form and meaning. His work comes from his full understanding of the historical reality of his own people, and from recognising all the factors that have been shaped by this historical moment, whether positive or negative. He succeeded in recreating this historical reality in his narratives. Each novel written by Kanafani represents a stage in the Palestinian nation. His message in *Men in the Sun* is clear: the past should not imprison Palestinians and there is no individual salvation. Kanafani successfully portrayed the journey of the Palestinian suffering; this journey is reflected profoundly in the universal human suffering, thus making this narrative one of a kind among other writings by Kanafani, and a unique masterpiece in the Palestinian literature in general.¹⁰¹

The journey taken by the three characters represents the struggle of life the characters are going through while seeking opportunity and dreams. Kanafani's characters seek to liberate themselves from the struggle of life itself, which becomes the true struggle, as what they truly seek is freedom from the turmoil in their lives.

¹⁰⁰ See F. Wadi, *Thalath 'alamat fi l-riwaya l-Filistiniyya*.

¹⁰¹ See R. Ashour, *al-Tariq ila al-Khaima al-Ukhra: dirasah fi a'mal Ghassan Kanafani*, Dar al-Adaab, Beirut, 1977, p. 80.

His usage of metaphors and symbols involves the readers throughout this familiar journey in which the men travel to seek their hopes and dreams, also they seek to shape their own response to history's cruelty at this moment in their lives. It is the story of their search for a way to deal with the torment of loss, or an escape from it. Places and objects in Kanafani's stories carry symbols and metaphors of exile and much loss.

However, as previously discussed, this journey ends with the suffocation of the men inside the empty tank of the lorry. Kanafani uses images and language to provoke the reader to anticipate and question what will finally happen. Abul Khaizaran was delayed on the second checkpoint by the guards who heard rumors of Abul Khaizaan's sexual adventures with a prostitute. It is ironic because in reality Abul Khaizaran lost his manhood while defending his homeland. This image of Abul Khaizaran being held up over such a topic while the three men are suffocating inside the oven-like tank keeps the reader in suspense. Abul Khaizaran could not confess that he lost his manhood, perhaps he was proud to brag about his fictitious adventures to a certain extent, what is certain though is that smuggling miserable Palestinians in the back of his truck to collect money will not restore his manhood, but will definitely bring him enough money to lead a good life. He manages to escape the questions of the guards, and drives his lorry out of sight to allow the three men to come out. Sadly, when he opens the tank, he finds the three men dead.

In *History and Endings*, Barbara Harlow explains that Kanafani's narratives are seen to contribute to the historical record of the Palestinians and to enter, as well, into the very events and significant moments of people's lives: the flight (*hurub*),

exile (*ghurbah*), resistance (*muqawamah*), steadfastness (*sumud*), and ultimately the awaited return (*audah*) to Palestine.¹⁰²

The time and place of *Men in the Sun* are relevant to Kanafani's life, as in the year and month in which it was written, January 1962 Kanafani was in Beirut with no official papers, so he had to hide in his home. This tells us that the events in Kanafani's life inspired him to write the novel. Kanafani was an exile just as his characters.

The three Palestinian men have reached the Iraqi-Kuwait border and left behind the refugee life and social and family traditions. For example, Abu Qais's son was educated by a teacher, who was trained to use weapons yet did not know how to lead the prayer in the village, which is unusual in the society of Imams and, so it could be said, he challenges the patriarchal traditional authority.

Assad, on the other hand, challenged the traditional arranged marriage in the Palestinian conservative society. Lastly, Marwan has to work in Kuwait to support his mother, who was abandoned by her husband and her older son. Therefore, Kanafani reveals the characters' challenges against the conservative society, and through this, he emphasises the necessity to resist the traditional leadership and the patriarchal authority. As for the three Palestinians in the novel, the solution is not to seek a Promised Land in Kuwait, but nor is it to live or accept the traditional culture of the conservative past.

¹⁰² B. Harlow, *History and Endings*, pp. 102-113.

Geography occupies a wide space in Palestinian literature. In *Men in the Sun*, as mentioned before, the three Palestinian men travel and seek a new geographical place that can provide them the justice they were deprived of under the occupation. Kanafani liberates the characters in his works from time to fit all moments of history, but remain attached to one place: their homeland. In *Men in the Sun*, Kanafani depicts the role of the borders in the destiny of Palestinians, thus, the Iraqi-Kuwaiti borders are a picture that reflects the silent death under the burning sun. And so, Palestine has become a political and intellectual question. The desert represents a political and military "border" that separates Palestinians from their geographical place or from their place as Arabs.

Khoury asserts that discovering borders contributed in the shaping of the Palestinian identity after the *Nakba* 1948. The borders meant that Palestinians have no place except Palestine; it also meant that the promise the Arab nationalists made to restore the lost homeland on the map had failed, and instead it only led to more borders, which caused more death among the Palestinians. However, these same borders have made it clear that the only way to restore and return to Palestine is through resistance. The dense symbols in *Men in the Sun* were not only employed merely to tell the story of the Palestinians, but to prove that it is not possible to narrate this story without reference to the land or the geographical place, which is part of its own identity as a Palestinian story.¹⁰³

In this context, Elias Khoury explains (in his commemoration of Kanafani *Watan Yulad fi l-Hikaya* ("The Birth of a Country in Narrative"), an important term he

¹⁰³ See E. Khoury, *Fi thikra al-arbain li-ghiyab Ghassan kanafani: Watan Yulad fi l-Hikayah*, *Majallat al-dirasat al-filastiniyya*, vol. 23, no. 29, October 2012, pp. 7-12.

refers to as "the geography of the Palestinian soul". This geography is based on the relationship with a certain place for those who have no place, in other words, those who have lost their own place in history and geography, like the Palestinians. He also argues that Edward Said's book *Out of Place* was not a coincidence, on the contrary, it's aim was to discuss the relationship between the exiled and Palestine; this is the same relationship Kanafani draws on to create his characters. Writers attempt to recreate the lost place through imagination and words, and through the desire and need to be free.

According to Khoury, Kanafani managed to manipulate time through his writing. He was killed at the age of thirty-six in 1972, and so, time stopped at that moment.

In Khoury's words, Kanafani remains still young in Palestinian collective memory. He built the story of Palestine during the little time he had. He took his characters on a journey before they discover their way to resistance. He was a writer of losses, yet, also, a writer of dreams. He turned the desperation of Palestinians into hope. Although the trauma of the *Nakba* left him diabetic, he still had an unquestionable love for life which made him a writer, a lover and a fighter. Death in his writings is a way of creating life itself, and he also built his homeland through his words. His love for life comes from his young age. His writings are still valid till today, and his stories speak of Palestine even now, as if he intended to deliver the idea that Palestine is not only a history of the past, but that it can be found in the future as well.

3.2. Tawfiq Salih's cinematic adaptation *Al-Makhduun* (*The Duped*)

The film version of *Men in the Sun* was directed by the Egyptian film director Tawfiq Salih and titled *Al-Makhduun* (1972) ("*The Duped*"). The film was made eight years after the publication of the novel. It made some significant changes to the plot (which will be discussed in detail later) however, it remained faithful to the actions and flashbacks technique in the narrative. It was produced under the patronage of the Syrian Ministry of Culture where Salih sought refuge from political pressure in Egypt. In an interview in 2009 on Aljazeera Documentaries, Salih mentions the obstacles he had to face, not only in Egypt, but also in Syria from his peers in the Syrian cinema. He was also surprised when, after 30 years of the production of the film, Salih was awarded in the Damascus Festival as the film is considered one of the most important productions in the Syrian cinema.¹⁰⁴

Considered one of the pioneers of realist cinema in Egypt, Tawfiq Salih had produced only seven feature films and seven short films. He was born in Alexandria on the 27 October 1926. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Language at Alexandria University, and then he was awarded a scholarship to Paris, where he worked as an assistant director on three films. This shaped his beginning as a director, and provided vital experience needed in order to direct his own films back in Egypt.

¹⁰⁴ S. Mazahi, interview with Tawfiq Salih in 2009, on www.doc.aljazeera.net , 25 August, 2013, retrieved: 6 August, 2015.

Once he returned to Egypt, he began a friendship with Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz (1953) with whom he collaborated on his film *Darb Al-Mahabil (Fools' Alley)* in 1955, which is considered one of the most important classical films in the Egyptian Cinema, although it did not succeed at the box office at the time.

Salih had his own understanding of film-making, which makes him a pillar in realism in Egyptian cinema. Though he did face very strict censorship in Egypt, for example, in his film *Al-Mutamarriduun (The Rebels, 1966)* in which he was obliged to use a lot of metaphors and symbols to prevent the film being banned, but it still was and he was ordered by censors to delete some scenes, change others and add a new ending to the film because it dealt with the theme of revolution. It received huge criticism because it did not meet up the audience's mood. His cinematic style was poorly appreciated in Egypt.

Yet, his masterpiece remains the film *Al-Makhduun (The Duped)*. It was shot in black and white and the scenes took place in Syria where Salih directed the film, with some scenes in Basra in Iraq. The film tells the story of four Palestinian men who had become refugees after the *Nakba*. Salih won six awards for *The Duped*; one of them was *Le Tapis d'Or* in the Tunisian Carthage. It was also awarded in Strasburg Film Festival for the Human Rights category in 1973.

The Duped was banned after its first screening in Cairo. The film continues to be banned today, despite all the international recognition and awards it has received. There were no critical reviews and articles on the film in Egypt, and no article was written on the awards the film received. The screening of the film remained exclusive among filmmakers and researchers at universities, but it was not allowed to be screened for the public.

In an interview with Mohammed Shahin, a critic for *Al-Majala Thaqaifiyyah* (cultural magazine) issued by the University of Jordan, Salih mentions the objection on the film and how the idea of making this film started. He says that his ideas are not acceptable by cinema producers. As for the idea of the film, he says that he read Kanafani's novel after three or four months of its publication and he decided to make a film based on this plot. After almost a month of this decision, Kanafani was visiting Cairo and it was an occasion to meet him. He met Kanafani who allowed the novel to be turned into a film.

After three days, the director signed the contract for the film and he received the budget to start filming. However, the management in the cinema institution changed and; consequently, the management strategy was changed. The management thought that discussing Palestine in a film was irrelevant to them. Salih's answer was that the country is helping Palestinians during the term of Abdel Nasser, so it does not make sense to see such a film as irrelevant to Egypt. The filming was postponed for more three years. However, he travelled to Syria where he got to know Sa'adallah Wannus with whom he has written the film.

After finishing writing the script, it was presented to the cinematic institution at the time in Syria, which was run by the government. Apart from the idea of the film, a report was written about Salih and Wannus accusing them of offending the Syrian regime. Thus, Wannus was dismissed from his position as the head of the Theatre Commission and Salih was ordered to leave the country within 48 hours. But they gave him the chance to offer a new novel to film, he offered twelve novels from the Syrian literature and they were all rejected. He asked to film the novel *Men in the Sun* for which they commissioned someone to write the script, but when Salih read

the script he thought it was disgraceful and refused to make it. Subsequently, he himself wrote the script and it was approved.

Salih started filming *The Duped* regardless of all the obstacles and the negative environment. The film was banned from the screening because it was considered poor from an artistic point of view. The rejection came from the commission that consists of members in the cinema institution. The first screening was for an audience of members and employees of the cinema institution. Salih says that many people were touched by the film; however, it was still banned.¹⁰⁵

The director, as discussed before, made significant changes to the plot of the novel. The three Palestinian men who die suffocating in silence in the book are shown in the film knocking on the walls of the tank when they start suffocating, to attract the attention of people outside. In her introduction to the book *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, Hilary Kilpatrick explains Kanafani's development on both political and artistic levels in this narrative, she also analysed the criticism Kanafani had after the publication of the book. Some, especially enraged patriots, read and took the ending literally and accused Kanafani in throwing Palestinians in the garbage. Kilpatrick argues that Kanafani's political and artistic senses were already developed when he wrote the novel; therefore, a metaphoric dimension must be acknowledged in the ending of the novel – it is more metaphorical than literal. In this context, the director Salih believed that a film that is similar to the plot of *Men in the Sun* would

¹⁰⁵ M. Shahin, interview with Tawfiq Salih, on www.alquds.co.uk, 21 August, 2013, retrieved: 5 September, 2015.

have appeared contradicting to the time when resistance movements were established, and so he changed the ending to suggest they were not defeated in spirit.

On this point, Hillary Kilpatrick's observations are rather relevant:

The novella tells of four Palestinians in exile struggling to build, or rebuild, a future. On one level it can be read as an expose of their weakness in preferring the search for material security over the fight to regain their land, and also as an attack on the corruption of the Arab regimes that allowed them to suffocate in an airless, marginal world of refugee camps But there is more to it than that. Abu Qais's memories of the land he left behind and of his daughter's birth a month after the family left its village could be matched by the stories of thousands of displaced persons who have been uprooted in Europe and elsewhere. The naïve, barely educated Marwan, setting off into the unknown in order to support his family, is a brother of the economic refugees from the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and the Indian subcontinent who throng London, Paris, and Munich. The desert, often used as a symbol by Kanafani, here represents the ordeal of fire that the Palestinians must pass through, and it is depicted in its starkest guise. Its presence contributes to the suspense that is built up as the lorry races along under the broiling August sun. Moreover, Kanafani's interest in technique is clearly revealed, as he skillfully blends present and past in the consciousness of his four characters, thereby enabling the reader to perceive their motives for undertaking the hazardous journey. The careful construction and controlled economy of the writing contribute to the total effect of a short novel that is among the best in Arabic literature.¹⁰⁶

The film opens with a scene of the endless desert and a man approaching from distance who is recognized as Abu Qais. The appearance of the desert in the opening of the film aims at emphasising that the desert is the dominant setting and it will take

¹⁰⁶ H. Kilpatrick, "introduction" to her translation of G. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, p. 11.

part in the fate of the character. On the screen, lines from an iconic poem titled *Abi* (*My Father*) by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish appear:

My father once said:
He who has no homeland,
Has no sepulchre on this earth,
And forbade me to leave.¹⁰⁷

In his book *Il Romanzo Arabo al Cinema* (the Arabic Novel in Cinema), Aldo Nicosia argues that the director Salih suggests in his opening to *The Duped* a crucial perspective to the fate of Palestinians who seek individual salvation, a new homeland maybe, or even a new identity. Thus, any attempt to individual salvation is constantly destined to fail under the burning heat of the desert. The presence of carcasses of animals along the road foreshadows their tragic fate; the desert represents a graveyard for those who seek a better life away from homeland. However, this bad omen in the narrative is represented in the white sky which predicts a blank and an empty future. It is also reflected in the black bird hovering over Abu Qais.¹⁰⁸

As for the character Abul-Khaizaran, in both the novel and the film he embodies the Arab leaderships that drive their people to the miserable abyss. This character was very significant and essential at that time especially since the film was

¹⁰⁷ وأبي قال مرة "
الذي ما له وطن
ماله في الثرى ضريح
" ونهاني عن السفر

¹⁰⁸ See A. Nicosia, *Il Romanzo Arabo al Cinema*, Carocci Editore, Roma, 2014, p. 56.

produced after the *Naksa* (the setback in 1967, when the Arab regimes and armies were badly defeated by Israel in the Six Day War).

The concept of Honour is ironic in the film. Many characters in the film swear by their honour (in Arabic: bi-sharafi- which means "I swear by my honour"). The characters express promises they can never keep.¹⁰⁹ Salih successfully interprets Kanafani's idea, this irony in cinema intends to show many characters with no honour at all, such as Abul Khaizara, because they lost their homeland and they are making no efforts to take back what they lost.

The film was both criticised and praised for the change it had made to the tragic ending of Kanafani's novel. Readers of Ghassan Kanafani saw a betrayal and abuse to his literary work, whereas viewers of the film found the change in the ending a more positive representation of the Palestinians' political aspirations.

As previously stated, some critics interpreted Abul-Khaizaran's question "why didn't they bang on the walls of the tank?" literally, and thought it suggested the lack of resistance by Palestinians. Other critics find it irrelevant to ignore the historical context of the Palestinian life, and believed that the three men must have undoubtedly knocked on the walls of the tank. The Lebanese critic and writer Elias Khoury interprets the question as a symbol of the condition of all Palestinians from *Nakba* until now. Palestinians in fact are knocking and objecting to the occupation with their traumatised souls and their wounded bodies, and it is ironic to ask them why not they knocked. He argues that it is more suitable in this context to ask "why didn't you hear our knocking?" or "why do you pretend to be deaf while you obviously can hear?".

¹⁰⁹ A. Nicosia, *Il Romanzo Arabo al Cinema*, p. 59.

Khoury is admitting that Arab leaderships and armies failed and abandoned the Palestinians and then they accuse the Palestinians of not asking for any help. Palestinians talk a lot about memory, a collective and individual memory, as a result of a reality that makes them live their present through the memory. *Nakba* did not end, it continues. Kanafani's death suggests a new method of writing in which Palestinians collect the pieces of memory and recreate new words out of it to draw a home while they wait to return to their homeland.

There is a time-gap between the publication of *Men in the Sun* and the production of the film *The Duped*. The June War of 1967 took place during this period of time. It also witnessed the creation and the development of the organised independent resistance movement in Palestine. This historical context was the focal point for Tawfiq Salih's cinematic representation of the novel.

In her article *History and Endings*, Harlow explains that the objection to the film on grounds of its infidelity to the original text ignores the active role of the film's production in the historical circumstances. Both Ghassan Kanafani's novel and Tawfiq Salih's film contribute to the making of the Palestinian history, as they both contribute in archiving and documenting historical moments as a form of political resistance, integrating with the armed resistance as well.

In 1963, three years before the publication of *Men in the Sun*, Kanafani had been living and working in Kuwait, and from there he went to Beirut upon a request from George Habash¹¹⁰ to start collaborating on the magazine *Al-Hurriya* (freedom).

¹¹⁰ George Habash was the founder and secretary general of the left-wing secular and revolutionary organization Palestine Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). He was an influential Palestinian politician.

Habash was developing the Arab Nationalist Movement¹¹¹ at the time, in which Kanafani was involved, as well, alongside the resistance movements. Still, an armed struggle led by the Palestinian resistance movement in 1963 remained an aspiration to many, such as Yasser Arafat of Al-Fatah (one of the leading Palestinian political parties and considered the largest faction of the PLO).

In 1964, the Arab League created the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and they placed Ahmad Shuqairy as president of the organisation. This organisation aimed to create a controllable expression of nationalist goals by Palestinians to avoid the emergence of independent Palestinian resistance organisation. However, this idea of liberating Palestine by the hands of the Arab regimes was rejected by Al-Fatah, which carried out its first armed operation against Israel, and took the cover name Al-Asifa (the Storm). Still, many Palestinians believed in Jamal Abdel Nasser and waited for him to deliver their salvation; however, the June War of 1967 took place. This huge defeat of the Egyptian Army led to the collapse of all illusions regarding Pan-Arab deliverance.

Subsequently, Habash formed the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Kanafani became the spokesman of the Front. On March 21 1968, the Karamah Battle took place. The Israeli army attacked Palestinian strong points near the Jordanian city Karamah, which sits on the border between Jordan and Israel. Information about the planned attack had reached the Palestinian commandos who started preparing to get ready for the attack few days before it actually happened, and

¹¹¹ The Arab Nationalist Movement (in Arabic: Harakat Al-Qawmiyyin Al-Arab) was a pan-Arab and revolutionary nationalist organization famous in the Arab world, and especially among Palestinian movements.

which led to the defeat of the Israeli attackers. The Karamah battle became a focal point in the history of the Palestinian resistance movements. Thus, the commandos or "Fedayeen", who were seen as out-laws guerrillas, had become "national heroes". They proved that armed resistance is possible and that it can succeed even more than Arab armies, who had been massively defeated in the Six Day War in 1967.

Following this legendary victory, Al-Fatah took over the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1969. The vision of Palestine as a democratic secular state was presented by the PLO as its basic goal in its armed struggle. It is a doctrine which preaches Palestine as a country where Muslims, Christians and Jews live together in harmony as equal citizens.

The year 1970 was marked by the events of Black September (*Ayloul al-aswad*). September of that year witnessed the killing of thousands of Fedayeen by the Jordanian government, which pushed the Palestinian resistance movement out of Jordan in 1971 with all the commandos operating on the Jordanian borders. Then Salih's film was produced in 1971, and the following year, Kanafani was killed in Beirut in a car explosion, for which the Israeli secret services Mossad claimed responsibility.¹¹²

Part of the Palestinian struggle is to produce a powerful ideology in a way that shapes a strong response to the Israeli policies; an ideology that allows an historical interpretation. Harlow suggests that Kanafani's interpretation of history in *Men in the Sun* is an open-ended history:

¹¹² B. Harlow, *History and Endings*, p. 108.

Kanafani's own interpretation of history, as elaborated in his narration of the story of the 'men in the sun' is that of an open-ended history, a historical interpretation which both allows for the question 'why didn't they knock?' and solicits answers to it. His story ... neither purports to serve as custodian of realism in political and social thinking, nor it proposes the vision of a 'final solution'. There is no way to understand what the story meant from beginning to end. It only happens that the threads begin to grow clearer.¹¹³

Through its interpretation of the tragic ending of Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, *Al-Makhduun (The Duped)* can be seen as an interpretation of the Palestinian resistance movement. This interpretation is more responsive to this moment in the Palestinian history which witnessed the rise of resistance movements. In Salih's film ending, Abu Qais's corpse is found with his fist (which clutches a wristwatch that is not longer there) raised in the air, as a symbol of Palestinian resistance. This film comes as a struggle against the necessity for a historical ending; it participates alongside literature and in the resistance and the struggle to have a place in history. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also stressed the importance to train combatants to use a camera on the battlefield alongside the gun.

Following the production of Tawfik Salih's film, many new events occurred in Palestinian history. In October 1973, the October War happened, which was seen by Arabs as a moral victory, although the Egyptian and Syrian armies were militarily defeated. However, in 1977, the Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat signed peace accords with Israel, and, consequently, Camp David Accords were also signed in

¹¹³ B. Harlow, *History and Endings*, p. 110.

1979. This caused the isolation of Egypt from the rest of the Arab world. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with the intention of securing its northern borders and to destroy the political leadership of the PLO. Another important topic had spread across the Arab nations after the Camp David Accords; it is the topic of a normalisation of relations with Israel, whether economic, political or cultural. It had become a heated debate among intellectuals and Arabs, especially a cultural normalisation with the enemy which had become the central issue of controversy by intellectuals and writers in Lebanon, Egypt and the Occupied Territories. However, intellectuals, writers, journalists, thinkers, academics, and other cultural institutions still remain under harassment and abuse by Israel to restrict their voices and intellectual freedom.

The Duped is also a combination of fiction and documentary techniques, especially for the first twenty minutes. The director merges a sequence of mute reportage-like scenes that deal with the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the war of 1948, and the Palestinian exodus. Salih's script includes crowds of Palestinian displaced refugees, images that represent the historical period of time to emphasise the identity of the displaced. The film also shows the distribution of food and blankets and signs related to the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), an agency that carries out direct relief and works for the Palestinian refugees. Many of the refugees in the film have subsistence cards; they stand in front of a window belonging to the office responsible for registering the data of every card. Some men are shown as they distribute meals; Abu Qais is waiting for his turn to take the meal. These scenes propose a sequence of images of ten years of humiliation in exile and inflicted by some charitable institutions. These images portray how refugee camps substitute the normal life; they also reflect the loss of economic activities Palestinians

enjoyed in the years before the *Nakba*. The combination of fiction and documentary consists also of scenes for picking olives. In addition, some Arab leaders are seen in an international conference for peace with the presence of King Faruk I of Egypt, the grand mufti (cleric) of Jerusalem Amin Al-Husseini and Abd Al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ See A. Nicosia, *Il Romanzo arabo al Cinema*, p. 58.

4. The Tragedy of Northern Ireland and Resistance: Bobby Sands' *Writings from Prison*

This chapter discusses the struggle faced by Bobby Sands and his Irish republican prisoners for freedom against the British rule. His memoir, *Writings from Prison*, is considered one of the most important prison memoirs in Ireland.

Bobby Sands was born in 1954 in Rathcoole, a predominantly loyalist district of north Belfast. Bobby left school in June 1969 and worked as an apprentice coach-builder for three years. During his life, he never expressed sectarian views. Moreover, he ran for a Protestant club called the Willowfield Temperance Harriers. More intimidations were exerted on Sands at work. His family was forced to leave their house in 1972 after threats and attacks and they moved to Twinbrook in the nationalist west Belfast. Bobby Sands joined the Irish Republican Army in his late teens. He led the blanket protest and the second hunger strike and died on his sixty-sixth day of hunger.

Sands was a member of the Irish Republic Army (IRA). He was only twenty-seven years old when he died in the H Blocks of Long Kesh Prison on 5 May 1981. He died after serving eight years in prison.

In his book *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, John Feehan describes the funeral of Sands as a glorious and dignified funeral; only heroes receive such recognition from their own people. Regardless of attempts by the British government to label him as a criminal, he remains a hero to his own people and to many people around the world. On this day, another critical issue surfaced at St.

Luke's church: a rule was enforced to remove the Irish flag from the coffin. Many wanted to leave the church with disgust but they did not wish to insult the Sands family. Moreover, public masses for the soul of Bobby Sands were prohibited.

On Thursday 7 May 1981 the people of Belfast witnessed one of the largest funerals ever seen in Ireland since the death of Parnell. It was the funeral of a young Member of Parliament; Bobby Sands- labeled a criminal by Margaret Thatcher- a young poet who died after sixty-six days of a painful hunger-strike and eight years of imprisonment. A hundred thousand people walked in silence behind the draped coffin and almost as many more lined the route.¹¹⁵

Between 1980 and 1981, Republican prisoners of the Maze prison outside Belfast in the North of Ireland held their hunger strikes, to restore their status as political prisoners. A hunger strike is often seen as an act of protest, and to starve to death in front of the enemy's eyes and in his prisons is significant. The Irish hunger strikers found a hunger strike was the only possible way to gain their rights, and to draw public and international attention to their political goals, or to die with dignity and turn into heroic martyrs. Sands' hunger strike has become a symbol of freedom and determination. Although the British government, with the help of heads of state and church, attempted to break his will, and distort the truth about Sands through the British propaganda, politicians and part of the Irish media, still they did not succeed. His death is evidence of the brutality and oppression of Britain.

¹¹⁵ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, The Permanent Press, New York, 1983, p. 17.

In his foreword to *Writings from Prison*, Gerry Adams explains that hundreds of prisoners were held in Long Kesh prison under a regime of political or special category status. He also clarifies that this status was introduced by the British government in June 1972 after a successful hunger strike by the republican prisoners in the Belfast jail. However, the British government changed its strategy and introduced a new legislation which classified all prisoners arrested after midnight 1 March 1976 as criminals, whereas before midnight they were classified as political prisoners. He adds that the British government attempted many times to criminalise the struggle of the Irish people to gain their freedom by criminalising Irish political prisoners, such as Bobby Sands.

The British government's main objective was to portray the IRA as murderers and criminal thugs, thirsty for blood, and this propaganda was successful. However, the IRA issued some statements showing its willingness to negotiate and talk; but the British did not want to negotiate. Gerry Adams also mentions this point in his foreword; after Sands went on hunger strike, Sands was elected as MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone. This historic moment indicated the extent of support for the prisoners among the nationalist people, although the British propaganda described the prisoners as having no support. At this time, Thatcher had the opportunity to settle the issue of the political prisoners. Instead, the British refused to negotiate, and created legislation that would change the electoral law and prevent another republican prisoner candidate from standing for election. Bobby Sands received 30,492 votes, which shows the

extent to which the nationalist people supported the prison struggle and recognised republican prisoners as political prisoners.¹¹⁶

The media also ignored these statements. These statements were kept away from the public; therefore, the public were not informed of the motives behind the actions and resistance of Sands and other IRA members. For example, in 1973, the Provisional IRA issued an important statement:

Will talk achieve more than the gun? Yes, definitely yes. And the IRA are more than willing to talk. We have said many times that we detest this war with its suffering and misery and we speak from first hand knowledge of that suffering and misery. We would much rather settle our differences in a civilized way. But let one point be very clear. It is the British, not we, who still refuse to negotiate.¹¹⁷

Sands did not only lead the blanket men protest and the second hunger strike, he was a very prolific writer among the H Block prisoners. He wrote poems, short stories, and press statements. His poems and short stories were published in the *Republican News* under the pen-name Marcella, his sister's name. His writings record the last four years of his life in the H Blocks 3, 4, 5 and 6. The conditions in which he wrote were almost impossible, yet, he produced many important pieces. They were written on toilet rolls or on cigarette roll-ups with a biro pen. His writings describe life inside the H Block prison in a very graphic and creative way.

¹¹⁶ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, Mercier Press, Cork, 1983, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 36.

4.1. Historical background of the Irish struggle

The history of Ireland reflects many aspects of political, economic, educational and cultural discrimination on basis of religion and national affiliation. Many religious and political factors are important in the relationship between Britain and Ireland. On the academic research level regarding the Northern Ireland conflict, David Miller argues in his book *Rethinking Northern Ireland* that the mainstream writing on Northern Ireland tends to ignore research presenting inconvenient empirical data. In particular, with regard to the lack of attention to the repressive apparatus of the state, he asserts that the role of the British army in Northern Ireland was not dealt with sufficiently in academic research over the years. The topic of the Anglo-Irish conflict has been subjected to the British censorship. Miller suggests that the colonial dimension is a fundamental part of the conflict in Ireland, which has been neglected by writers from British backgrounds and, occasionally, unionist background:

A wide variety of contemporary authors explain Northern Ireland as the result of backwardness, extremism, myths, religion, tribal conflicts, irrationality, activism, emotional attachment to self-serving versions of history, etc... such explanations tend to fail to register that the conflict is about the pursuit of interests, and most tend incorrectly to leave the role of the British state as a party to the conflict out of consideration or to see it in terms which accord well with the propaganda of the Northern Ireland office as holding the ring...the most common approach to the conflict in Ireland is to see it as some sort of internal conflict... 60 per cent of writing on the conflict since 1968 has conceptualized the problem in this way... there are recent text books on Ireland which attempt to explain the troubles by reference to the backwardness of Northern Irish politics, culture and economics. Additionally, some

Marxist analysts view the project of British imperialism as bringing progress to the backward colonies and as helping to modernize Ireland.¹¹⁸

In the twelfth century, the first incursions to Ireland were commissioned and authorised by the English Pope Adrian IV. The commission consisted of Anglo-Norman parties. However, in 1171, the King of England Henry successfully invaded Ireland with the aim of taking over the whole island and controlling the Normans and the Irish. By the sixteenth century, the English allowed many Scottish and English who spoke English and who were loyalists to the royal English family in the United Kingdom to migrate to the island.

The Six County State had its origins in the seventeenth century when, after the defeat of the native Irish chieftains, the British occupation forces evicted hundreds of thousands of Irish Catholics from their lands and homes and replaced them with English Scottish Protestants. The present Unionists in the North are the descendants of these settlers. But they have long since ceased to be an ethnic group. There were many other parts of Ireland where the British dispossessed the Irish and gave their land to foreigners... those of the dispossessed Irish who remained at home and did not emigrate became the hewers of wood and drawers of water, menial servants in their own country, subservient to their dispossessors. The present Nationalists are descended from these dispossessed Irish.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ D. Miller, *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism*, Routledge, New York, 2014, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 25 .

Ulster was not a desert; it was privileged with prosperity and fertility which encouraged the Scottish and the English to migrate. This plantation plan caused a serious demographic and ethnic change in Ireland. It also caused a change in the official language to that of English. Since the 1880s, the Irish nationalists launched demands for a Home Rule in Ireland from Britain.

The French Revolution inspired many nations across the world, including the Irish people. Irish Nationalists adopted the ideas of revolution, which was perceived with hostility and hatred from the side of the settlers and they banded the Irish nationalists with the consent of the British government. They even established the Orange Order organisation to keep their dominance on the confiscated territories.

In 1921, Ireland was declared independent. However, the northern part of Ireland remained under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. The demographic change in the Irish population resulted in the conflict between the demands of the catholic minority of the north of Ireland which was calling for the independence for the unity of all of Ireland, with the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland part, which was loyal to the United Kingdom and does not wish the partition from it.

In her article *Religion, Ethnicity and Colonialism as Explanations of the Northern Ireland Conflict*, published in David Miller's *Rethinking Northern Ireland*, Pamela Clayton points out an important feature of the Irish conflict: colonialism. She explains how the Irish people were at a disadvantage in many aspects of their lives, including education and housing, in addition to political and economic discrimination. Irish people, particularly Catholics, were subjected to many discriminatory laws passed by the British government:

Although a significant feature of the Catholic majority in Ireland is precisely that it is Catholic, and various 'No Popery' campaigns addressed the fears of many Protestants who had a horror of being 'ruled by' the Pope, this needs to be set in context. Irish Catholics were not merely members of a different Christian sect, they were also a colonised people, a conquered people, a people who had been inferiorised from the twelfth century onwards. They had been subject to more disabilities than Irish Dissenters and they had been unrepresented in the short-lived Irish Parliament which was abolished by the 1800 Act of Union. In short, they had experienced different and inferior treatment from Protestants and had been powerless, so they had much to avenge.¹²⁰

Northern Ireland suffered political and security upheavals for many years. It also caused an armed conflict. Since 1800, Ireland has witnessed several wars between the English colonising authority and the Irish people. The Irish people sought a national independence; the peak of the Irish resistance was in 1916, the Easter rising, when the Irish rebels proclaimed an independent Ireland despite the British efforts to oppress the Irish rebellion. By the end of the First World War, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was formed, in order to resist the British imperialism.

In 1920, the British Parliament passed a new Act to solve the Irish dilemma. The new law introduced two parliaments and two local governments. Ireland had been partitioned into two, and Dublin to govern the southern part of Ireland. The second one, in Belfast, was intended to govern Northern Ireland. In 1921, Great Britain approved the independence of 26 southern counties and recognised Ireland as an

¹²⁰ P. Clayton, *Ethnicity and Colonialism as Explanations of the Northern Ireland Conflict* in D. Miller, *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism*, p. 49.

independent country in the commonwealth. In 1949, Ireland seized its independence and was called the Republic of Ireland. However, the six northern counties in Ireland remained, as a result of a public vote, part of the United Kingdom. The six counties enjoyed a self-governing. However, political and sectarian conflicts continued between the loyalists to the British government on one side, and the republicans on the other.

The sectarian conflict is ignited by the fact that the majority of the loyalists to Britain in Northern Ireland are Protestants. They, ethnically, have English and Scottish roots; their ancestors immigrated to Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, is native Irish and seeks to unite the whole of Ireland without any division or partition between the north and the south; thus, it is the Protestants who are the unionists who voted in favour of the British rule in Northern Ireland on religious and ethnic basis. In her seminal article *Religion, Ethnicity and colonialism as explanations of the Northern Ireland conflict*; Pamela Clayton argues that the idea of a religious conflict deserves very careful consideration. Clayton discusses this internal division between Protestants and Catholics. Additionally, she explains both the labels each religious group identifies itself with as well as the labels they identify others with.

The very frequency of the labels 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' used by insiders themselves points to the importance of religion, which is indeed one of the features distinguishing the region from the rest of the United Kingdom. Virtually everybody if

pressed identifies him/herself with a religious grouping and identifies other people in the same way.¹²¹

Clayton also explains that the renowned sociologist of religion Steve Bruce, who published numerous books on Northern Ireland such as *God Save Ulster* (1986), who also describes the sectarian conflict in Ireland. Clayton writes that, according to Bruce, religion is the root of the Irish problem:

Protestant ethnicity is claimed to be one of the keys to the conflict by writers such as Bruce. Bruce argues that much thinking about Northern Ireland is neither here nor there because it fails to appreciate the strength of ethnic identification, the power of ethnic divisions. Northern Ireland is an ethnic conflict in which religion is an important element. Nationalists and Marxists, he argues, fail to appreciate that unionists will not magically become Irish if the British withdraw. It is certainly the case that Ulster Unionist' identities are not the result of ideological manipulation and nor do they mask the true (class or national) interests of Protestants in Ireland. Indeed it is quite possible to see unionist ideology as an efficient means of pursuing Protestant interests... the weight of his case pulls in the opposite direction suggesting that they are too difficult to change... several other authors have claimed that Protestants object to a united Ireland, because of their irreducible sense of Britishness.¹²²

Bruce claims that the religious division is the cause of the conflict. He argues that Protestantism and Catholicism are in nature vastly different, thus it is natural that

¹²¹ P. Clayton, *Ethnicity and Colonialism as Explanations of the Northern Ireland Conflict* in D. Miller, *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism*, p. 41.

¹²² D. Miller, *Rethinking Northern Ireland*, p.11.

the two groups are in conflict. Therefore, the voting behaviour was influenced by the religious views. The best indicator for that is the Orange Order, which is a Protestant institution based in Northern Ireland and stands for civil rights and religious freedom. This institution was only open to Protestants from all dominations and was closed to Catholics. It was very influential in the Unionist politics. They regarded themselves as a purely religious organisation. The name even is attributed to King William of Orange, who defeated the Catholic King James II. The organisation is an indicator on how the voting behaviour is affected by the religious domination in Northern Ireland. Protestants have proved a cohesive behaviour in voting for their support to parties favouring the union with the United Kingdom.¹²³

The struggle in Northern Ireland took many forms. The most important was the struggle to obtain more political rights after the British rule in the north. The Catholic minority suffered discrimination in education and jobs, which led to political and armed struggles. Even public housing policy is controlled by religious division, and the majority of people in urban areas live in towns in residential segregation. The political struggle took a sectarian path which led to the violence in Northern Ireland. Each religious group had its own political agenda which increased the gap between the two groups in the Irish society and resulted in social and religious isolation in certain counties, such as Belfast. Moreover, the Protestant population celebrates different religious rituals to the Catholics, which has led to many clashes over the years. Each group has its own role models and important religious and political figures.

¹²³ D. Miller, *Rethinking Northern Ireland*, p. 45.

On the political spectrum, as mentioned before, the majority of Protestants were in favour of the union with Britain, while the majority of Catholics were in favour of a home rule, liberation from Britain and one home with no division. The predominantly Protestant unionist party was the dominant political party in Northern Ireland, while the presence of the predominantly Catholic nationalist party was very weak. Also the voting system was in favour of the predominantly Protestant unionists at the expense of the predominantly Catholic nationalists.

On 8 March 1973, a referendum was offered for the electorate in Northern Ireland regarding whether they wish to remain with the United Kingdom or not. Unionists voted "yes" to remain part of the United Kingdom. However, majority of the Catholic electorate abstained.

A referendum held on 8 March 1973 duly reaffirmed the desire of the majority to remain citizens of the United Kingdom. The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the IRA recommended their supporters to abstain. Forty-one per cent abstained, only 1 per cent voted against, while 58 per cent voted for continuing union with Britain.¹²⁴

In his introduction to *Writings from Prison*, Sean MacBride briefly explains the Anglo-Irish conflict. He discusses how events led to the hunger strike and how the British people regard Ireland. He argues that the ordinary people of England are not concerned with what happens in Ireland and that they were taught to believe that the Irish are not rational and are impossible to handle, and that the presence of the British

¹²⁴ J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985 politics and Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.442.

government in Northern Ireland is necessary to prevent the Irish from killing each other. He continues to argue that they are not aware of the injustice and brutal oppression from which Ireland suffered until the Treaty 1921, and do not realise that the forced settlements in Ireland led to civil war. They also do not know that the enforced partition of Ireland resulted in continuous state of civil war since 1922 between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Britain enforced more laws and legislations that deepened the oppression inflicted on the Irish people.¹²⁵

In Northern Ireland, the British authority cancelled many laws and installed a regime similar to that of a police-state. The main goal of this regime was to avoid an increase in the nationalist minority that would be larger than the pro-British population, which was Protestant. Therefore, a regime of discrimination based on religious beliefs was established. This systematic policy of discrimination which aimed to deny Catholics employment and housing, thus contributed in maintaining a smaller number of Catholics. Such discrimination would force them to leave the area and, consequently, the Catholic population would decrease.

As a revolutionary, Sands succeeds in explaining his ideas on freedom, and describing the struggle and the torture he faced in the prison. His battle was also to expose the brutality of the British government in dealing with the political prisoners. Throughout *Writings from Prison*, he assures himself that they, his Irish comrades, will win and victory will be their reward. His expressions of the humiliation he received in the prison cells are powerful:

¹²⁵ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 17.

We'll get those bastards someday, I told myself. We'll see how big they are then, I thought, as I spat out a mouthful of blood into the corner. We'll see how great they are then... Goodmorning! Would you care to put on the prison clothing and go to work, clean your cell, wash yourself or polish my boots?.¹²⁶

In his diaries, Bobby Sands restored his strength each time he thought about his family. The family's support was a source of power for him and, through their letters and visits; they assured him that they were behind him. This reveals what a good family man.

The prison management applied a systematic policy of torture, of which Sands was aware and which he resisted, as he wrote in his diaries. The prisoner officers kept on harassing the prisoners and their families. Moreover, they limited the duration of the family visits in order to break their spirits:

The thought of seeing my family was comforting. It was the highlight and only highlight of each long torturous month. Twelve highlights per year! Half an hour of comparative happiness each visit. That's six hours of comparative happiness a year. I did a quick bit of mental arithmetic: that's six hours out of 8,760 per year. Six lousy hours and they harass you and your family for every minute of it, every single minute of it!¹²⁷

In his *Writings from Prison*, Sands mentions how the horrific tortures led some of his comrades to the verge of insanity. On the other hand, many others

¹²⁶ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 27.

¹²⁷ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 36.

continued their resistance, though some comrades surrendered. However, he reminds himself that he has a revolutionary spirit that cannot be broken. He is aware that the path he has taken is not easy, but is extremely difficult:

Freedom: that was it. Freedom to live again. I turned from the window to continue my relentless pacing, disheartened a little by the thoughts of freedom. I looked at the stinking, dirt-covered walls... there was no escaping this nightmare unless I gave up! A few – a very few- had already given up. They had put on prison clothes and conformed. Not that they had wished to do this. They just couldn't bear the unrelenting burden of torture, the continued boredom, tension and fear, the deprivation of basic necessities like exercise and fresh air, no association with other human beings except through a shout from behind a closed heavy steel door.¹²⁸

In the H Block prison cells, Sands experienced physical and mental torture at the hands of the officers. As previously stated, they had a systematic policy to humiliate the prisoners and push them to the edge. The prison officers also kept trying to break the resistance of the IRA men and criminalise them. However, Bobby Sands knew that the way to freedom is difficult but he had a great faith in his people's cause and in God, as he was a Catholic. They deprived him of all his rights so he had no weapons to fight with except his own body to fight, and so that became his weapon with which fight for his battle for freedom inside the prison. As a result, he chose to start his hunger strike:

¹²⁸ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 37.

I was taken to the prison hospital wrapped in a large fawn blanket where the doctor examined me. I remained there for two hours, and patched up like a mummy, sporting a black eye and seven stitches in my head I was returned to my punishment cell... I had regained my composure although I was a little disoriented and still trying to piece together my awful ordeal. But that soon became overshadowed by the thoughts of what was to come. No one could do anything for me. I could not tell a soul as I was isolated, alone and vulnerable. I was simply at their mercy and I had already discovered and learned that they did not now the meaning of the word... I stood naked before them, humiliated and embarrassed, my head bursting with the pain from my earlier beating.¹²⁹

Bobby Sands explains further that his resistance is seen as an act of disobedience by his oppressors:

I was charged with "disobeying an order"- that is, refusing to cooperate with the screw who was endeavoring to probe and search my anal passage... it would have made little difference to me had he been a brain surgeon, as the motive was purely to degrade and humiliate me, which was all part of the general torture to break our resistance... to wrap things up nicely, I was charged with assaulting the four screws who had almost murdered me that morning and to rub it in, I was also charged with causing self-inflicted wounds to myself and informed in a roundabout way that if I dared to make a formal complaint I would also be charged with making false allegations against prison officers.¹³⁰

His body started to change as a result of starvation. He worried about his family's feelings and their worry about him. His love to his family shows how humane he was; and this humanity contradicts the image the British government tried to portray Irish freedom fighters as criminals. He also sympathises with his comrades,

¹²⁹ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 49.

¹³⁰ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 50.

who suffer like him and whose families suffer as well. Yet, he realises that it is their struggle against injustice. The idea that many other Irish men and women suffer to gain their freedom is comforting for Sands, although he does not wish for it to continue as the whole country is at agony:

My mother and father and sister would be at home now and most likely they wouldn't be feeling the best. They would have had a terrible hard day and having seen my appearance they would do nothing else but worry. I thought of the families who had two or three sons inside and those with sons on the blanket protest, or those with daughters on protest in Armagh. It must be really hard on those families. There was heartbreak everywhere. That's all that ever came out of the stinking hellholes-heartbreak and grief.¹³¹

Bobby Sands dedicated his entire short life to resistance, and he died fighting for his own people. Freedom for him meant everything; he saw life worth living only through resistance, while surrendering is more humiliating than the beating and torture he experienced from the prison officers who represented oppression.

And once again I was glad I was resisting. Better suffering while resisting than being tortured without fighting back at all.¹³²

The torture he experienced in the prison haunted him, even in his sleep. This left serious damage to his soul. He considered the prison a hell-hole that devastated a

¹³¹ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 66.

¹³² B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 79.

lot of Irish free men and women. Throughout *Writings from Prison*, Bobby Sands describes in details the dreadful treatment the political prisoners had to face. But he shows powerful determination to carry on with their struggle; he assures that the brutal British authority shall not break their will for freedom:

It's bad when you can't even escape it through sleep, I thought... who would be the unlucky unfortunates tomorrow... who would be hosed down, beaten up or torn apart during a wing shift? Tomorrow would only bring more pain and suffering, boredom and fear and God knows how many humiliations, inhumanities and horrors. Darkness and intense cold, an empty stomach and the four screaming walls of a filthy nightmare-filled tomb to remind me of my plight, that's what lay ahead tomorrow for hundreds of naked Republican political prisoners-of-war, but as sure as the morrow would be filled with torture so would we carry on and remain unbroken. It was hard... but some day victory would be ours and never again would another Irish man or woman rot in an English hellhole.¹³³

Only a true revolutionary would be willing to sacrifice his own life. Sands chose the hunger strike to sacrifice the only thing he owned inside the prison: his body and his life. He chose to die a slow painful death for the sake of the freedom of Ireland:

I was a skeleton compared to what I used to be but it didn't matter. Nothing really mattered except remaining unbroken... they have nothing in their entire imperial arsenal to break the spirit of one single Republican political prisoner-of-war who refuses to be broken.¹³⁴

¹³³ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 80.

¹³⁴ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 81.

Sands refused to conform to the British laws and oppression. He realised that many political and religious leaders are encouraged to conform to the British authority. He was aware of what he really was. He refused to be called a criminal, for he was a political prisoner:

My position is in total contrast to that of an ordinary conforming prisoner: I am a political prisoner, a freedom fighter. Like the lark, I too have fought for my freedom, not only in captivity, where I now languish, but also while on the outside, where my country is held captive... I am now in the H Block, where I refuse to change to suit the people who oppress, torture and imprison me, and who wish to dehumanize me. Like the lark I need no changing. It is my political ideology and principles that my captors wish to change. They have suppressed my body and attacked my dignity... I have the spirit of freedom that cannot be quenched by even the most horrendous treatment.¹³⁵

"Our day will come" is a statement Sands repeats in *Writings from Prison*. He had a strong faith that the Irish resistance will be rewarded with victory. He gained strength from this faith each time the tortures and murders of the political prisoners increased in the prison. He knew that the H Block officers felt superior to them, and murdering and torturing the political prisoners was part of their policy to dehumanise the freedom fighters:

¹³⁵ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 84.

But I'll just lie here and continue to resist them knowing that some day our day will come... me? I will always remain the same- an Irishman fighting for the freedom of my oppressed people.¹³⁶

Although Sands lived in the prison in almost impossible conditions and despite his hunger strike, he remained positive. This positivity came from a strong belief in what he was fighting for. In addition, he was proud of what they accomplished, even though the British government refused to negotiate and deprived them every day of their rights and freedoms:

We in H Block are actively trying our political resistance into the armed struggle. No amount of torture has stopped this. We have not been depoliticized, we have not been criminalized, if anything the incessant torture has stiffened our revolutionary resolve and determination, driving us to achievements and heights that we could never have hoped to gain. We have not been deterred from freedom's fight but rather rallied to the forefront... The face of the British barbarity has once again been nakedly exposed in front of the world... the H Block is the rock that the British monster shall perish upon, for we in H Block stand upon the unconquerable rock of the Irish Socialist Republic.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, 97.

¹³⁷ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 217.

4.2. Bobby Sands and the IRA struggle

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), which Bobby Sands joined, was created in 1919 as a republican organisation that sought to end the British rule in Northern Ireland and establish the republic of Ireland that united Northern Ireland with the rest of the country. The IRA was established as a successor to the Irish Volunteers, which was founded in 1913 as a militant organisation. The IRA cannot be interpreted or understood outside its full economic, social, ethnic and cultural context.

In his book *The IRA: The Irish Republican Army*, James Dingley explains the IRA's ideology. He discusses the alternative culture the IRA envisioned for their own country. The problem was when they were denied the chance to realise this culture by a scientific culture, free market and liberal democracy. Dingley argues that this opportunity to realise their own alternative culture would have enabled them to achieve the economic and cultural status they desired in Ireland. The culture that was dominant was characterised by liberal democracy, free market and was Protestant. Meanwhile, the Republican ideology was established on a peasant proprietor economy and Catholicism and it refused to accept the liberal democracy and the free market. Therefore, the two cultures were completely opposed in their implications. Dingley claims that the big problem with Republicans is that their ideal culture is not possible to achieve in the modern world, it is unrealistic. According to him, the Republicans' alternative culture is a romantic reaction to modernity.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ J. Dingley, *The IRA: The Irish Republican Army*, Praeger, Santa Barbara, 2012, p. 200.

The main purpose of the IRA's objective was to end the British rule by means of armed force and military actions. The Sinn Fein (translated into Our Selves), the Irish Nationalist party, pursued the same objective but on a political level. The IRA operated as an independent organisation in the Irish independence movement.

Under the leadership of Michael Collins, the IRA implemented military tactics and actions to force the British government to negotiate during the years 1919-1921, during the Irish war of independence. Subsequently, a settlement was reached between the British government and Irish representatives, headed by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. The treaty of 1921, which was signed in London, provided the establishment of the Irish free state within a year with a self-governing authority within the British commonwealth. The treaty was controversial and led to division in opinions, which eventually led to the Irish Civil War 1922. This occurred because many Republicans and members of the IRA considered the treaty as treason and betrayal of the Irish people and the independence of Ireland, as the treaty acknowledged the rule of the British government, which would continue through the right of ratification over the Irish constitution granted by this treaty.

The reformed anti-Treaty IRA's initial constitution, drafted in the spring of 1922, before the onslaught of the Civil War, stated that: the Army shall be known as the Irish Republican Army, it shall be a purely volunteer Army, and its objects shall be:

1. To safeguard the honour and maintain the independence of the Irish Republic.
2. To protect the rights and liberties common to the people of Ireland.
3. To place its services at the disposal of an established Republican Government which faithfully upholds the above objects.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ B. O'Leary, *Mission Accomplished? Looking Back at the IRA*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, March 22, 2006.

In the 1960s, the Nationalists in Northern Ireland launched campaigns to demand their civil rights as they were subjected to discrimination in political arenas such as voting, in addition to discrimination in employment and housing by the predominantly Unionist Protestant government and population. Thus, violence erupted against protesters. Meanwhile, the IRA joined the demonstrations and attempted to protect the Catholic population from the extremist attacks on Catholic communities.

The IRA also launched attacks on British officials and police to defend the Nationalist Catholics. However, the British government portrayed the IRA and labeled it as a group of murderers and thugs, as John Feehan states in his book *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*. The British propaganda succeeded in portraying the IRA as a terrorist organisation in the United Kingdom. Denis O'Hearn describes the extent of the violence against Catholics following the civil rights movements in Northern Ireland in his book *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*. He also explains the brutality of the police against the demonstrators and how this brutality and oppression influenced Bobby Sands' role in the IRA and in resistance.

Society was splitting apart. For Catholics in mixed areas, the most immediate worry was the emergence of violent racist gangs. Rathcoole's were among the worst. Years later, Bobby Sands wrote that his "life began to change" after 1968. Civil rights marchers took to the streets and he watched as the television news showed the police attacking them. Sands was particularly impressed in early 1969, when a group of students from Queens University in Belfast set off on a civil rights march to Derry. Along the way they were repeatedly ambushed and the police blocked them from entering towns. The RUC were often observed chatting amiably with the attackers. As the students reached Burntollet Bridge outside of Derry, several hundred B-Special paramilitaries viciously attacked them "my sympathy and feelings really

became aroused after watching the scenes at Burntollet" he wrote. "that imprinted itself on my mind like a scar, and for the first time I took a real interest in what was going on... I became angry."¹⁴⁰

Sands was frustrated at the political and social situation of his nation. The oppression from the police supported by the British government had a great influence on Bobby Sands' later decision to join the IRA and the resistance movement. In addition, the racism from racist gangs he faced as a Catholic Irish which threatened him in many aspects in life, also led him to take a new turn in his life. The conditions he lived made life impossible to many Nationalists and Catholics, especially in unionist majority neighborhoods. What also made life more difficult for the nationalist families was knowing that the forces of order were on the side of the racist unionist groups.

James Dingley argues that the IRA represented a marginalised group, a group which found it really difficult to integrate into the state. He also explains that the state (represented by the dominant Unionists) failed to include the marginalised and create one community. As a result, two different and opposed communities emerged - Nationalist and Unionist - each with its own ideology. Subsequently, this led to a largely violent conflict, particularly from the excluded marginalised group who felt unequal, and who were denied their political, legal and economic rights.

Dingley also explains the issue of self-identification for Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and how this problem contributed to the conflict. This

¹⁴⁰ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song, Bobby Sands the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation*, Nation Books, New York, 2006, p. 9.

also explains the Protestants' recognition of themselves as Irish Unionist; on the other hand, it explains other Protestants rejection of themselves being Irish at all, or Anglo-Irish or British. This issue indicates a lack of a clear national identification, whereas the majority of Catholics do not suffer from the same issue. This insecurity about identities creates an unsafe atmosphere for Protestants in their place. This uncertainty is also directed towards the British government which the Protestants fear could get rid of them, besides the Nationalists rejection for them as true Irish.

As for the attitudes of Protestants towards Catholics, Dingley argues that they were violent and tried to exclude them. This violent attitude towards the Catholics flourished the development of the IRA and increased its appeal among the Catholic community in Ulster. The Catholic community's support and the tolerance for the IRA contributed to its operation in the Northern Ireland. Thus, the IRA rose in the face of intolerance and exclusion, and it emerged from the state's failure to adequately comprehend the divisional nature of the community in Northern Ireland. The state failed in designing appropriate policies that responded to the division. Dingley discusses how the British government failed to understand the construction of the community in Northern Ireland, thus, failing in the foundation of a civil community under a neutral non-religious government that would positively substitute the religious differences.

John Feehan points out that Sands was just an example of the thousands and thousands of Irish people in Northern Ireland whose options did not exist in the first place. As a matter of fact, the life story of Bobby Sands is the story of Northern

Ireland.¹⁴¹ He witnessed the reality of the situations, he saw civil right activists being oppressed, beaten, killed and imprisoned. Therefore, he could not stand and watch. The anger and discrimination were present in his daily life as a Catholic Nationalist Irish man.

In fact, Bobby Sands was an ordinary, young Irishman but he started to recognise the injustice inflicted on his own people at a young age. Alongside his family, he witnessed the discrimination against Catholics by the predominantly Protestant Unionist gangs. He experienced the oppression and fear which forced them to leave their own house in Rathcoole and move to a new area, Twinbrook, where many intimidated and evicted Catholic families moved. In his book *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, Denis O'Hearn explains that the horrible incidents Sands experienced, such as being beaten up and being forced out of his house, contributed in Sands' decision to join the IRA. Moreover, Bobby saw the failure of all peaceful means in resistance. Therefore, his decision to resort to violence and take on arms comes from his desire to free and protect his own people at all costs. O'Hearn argues that Bobby's commitment to the IRA and resistance grew with every family that was evicted and with every statement issued by the police to cover up the hostility.

After his decision to join a paramilitary group, the young Bobby Sands was not ready yet to carry weapons and use them. He needed time to be prepared for the military service and the IRA provided intensive courses in this field for the recruits. Sands proved to be a distinguished individual in the IRA, and, therefore, he was known to police and army and was chased until his arrest.

¹⁴¹ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 11.

As Feehan states, the support of the Irish people for the IRA is a powerful weapon in guerrilla warfare. According to Feehan, this weapon was the reason for winning the 1918-1921 war. In Northern Ireland, the majority of Nationalist homes were open to the IRA, especially in the rural areas. In fact, in Bobby Sands' *Writing from Prison*, he mentions that the government hated the people, not only the families of the prisoners. He explains how badly the prison regime treated the families. This has to do with the realisation that the Irish Nationalist people stood beside the IRA and supported them.

They despised our people as much as they despised and hated us. They insulted them, harassed them and broke their hearts by torturing their sons and daughters. I was naïve when I was young. Here I was now going back to a filthy concrete tomb to fight for my survival, to fight for my right to be recognised as a political prisoner-of-war, a right for which I would never stop fighting.¹⁴²

Sands did not serve long in the IRA as he was arrested soon after he had started his activities and military preparation. It was in autumn 1972 when the police stopped the car in which he was travelling to arrest him for the first time. Then he was taken to interrogation centers to be questioned. It was known that torture was carried out by the police as a procedure to take confessions from suspects against the Nationalists. This procedure was even approved by the British government. Feehan explains how difficult it is to tell precisely which torture technique was used to

¹⁴² B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p.62.

interrogate Sands after his first arrest because he was reluctant to recount his own suffering, in case this news came to the ears of his parents and caused them pain. However, he used to write about his sufferings, yet, no details were found on his first interrogation torture.¹⁴³ He was sentenced to five years in the Long Kesh prison for the theft, IRA membership and holding arms charges.

Long Kesh was a military aerodrome. When Bobby Sands was sentenced there, it still had its Nissen huts, which the prisoners called "cages". Long Kesh was more like a concentration camp with an inner fence of barbed wires, an outer fence, and in-between fences, as well as fences around each cage. Bobby was sent to Cage Eight with other men awaiting trials.

It was like something from a 1940s black-and-white movie, complete with barbed wire compounds, corrugated iron huts, watchtowers, and soldiers with Alsatian dogs patrolling the perimeter... the Nissen huts were big, leaky buildings with tin roofs that turned them into ovens on summer days and cavernous refrigerators on cold days.¹⁴⁴

John Feehan draws the comparison between Long Kesh and the German concentration camps. He states that between one cage and the other there was no communication, yet the prisoners used to shout across the wires. Feehan explains that the conditions in Long Kesh were so bad that two priests who visited the camp sent a telegram to the Red Cross in Geneva to request an immediate closure and

¹⁴³ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 84.

¹⁴⁴ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but An Unfinished Song*, p. 45.

investigation of the camps. The priests described the awful conditions and the violation of human and prisoners rights by the British soldiers.

IRA prisoners had previously enjoyed a "special category status" which entitled them to be regarded and recognised as political prisoners, not as ordinary criminals. They had the right to wear their own clothes, not the criminals' uniforms. They also had the right to refrain from the prison work. They also had the right to associate with other political prisoners within the prison confine and the right to educational and recreational facilities. Billy McKee went on his hunger strike to obtain these rights, with other republican prisoners. The hunger strike lasted thirty five days before the Secretary of State in Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, announced the special category status for all prisoners who were arrested as a result of the conflict. They were also moved from Crumlin Road Prison to Long Kesh Prison. However, the same rights McKee asked for and was granted were later denied to succeeding IRA prisoners when the British government launched its criminalisation operation.

By this time, Bobby Sands was willing to sacrifice his life to fight for his prison comrades to be treated as political prisoners, not as criminals. Sands fought to obtain the same rights as a special category status. They wanted to be treated as political prisoners, they also requested the right for a weekly visit or parcel or letter and the right to remission of sentences as provided for other prisoners. The role of the political prisoners had grown and become a very important aspect of the struggle of the Republicans. The fight of the political prisoners became a serious motivation for more Republican involvement in politics and in political representations. Sinn Fein played a major role in campaigning on the behalf of the political prisoners.

Bobby Sands developed and matured a great deal on the political and educational levels during his years of imprisonment in the Long Kesh Prison. He played football and learned to play the guitar. He seized every opportunity offered to prisoners to improve himself. He read intensively and mastered all matters of intellect. He learned his native Irish language and, when he was released, he perfected both the spoken and written aspects of the language.

He began to learn his native language and eventually when he was released he had a competent knowledge of both spoken and written Irish. It seems as if the comradeship, the common purpose, the idealism he was to experience among his companions had the effect of steeling his soul and strengthening his determination to follow through to the end the goals he had set before him.¹⁴⁵

Bobby recognised the importance of speaking his native language for the Irish freedom struggle. He realised that the British government and the Loyalists would not like it. He wrote in his diaries about how he used to speak Gaelic with his comrades in the prison and the prison officers in the H Block did not feel comfortable about it. To Sands, Gaelic was a source of pride and it was part of his identity as a free Irish man and Republican. Bobby's pride comes from acknowledging the harsh conditions of the prison that made it almost impossible for anyone to learn anything at all, yet they learned Gaelic:

¹⁴⁵ J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and The Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 86.

I continued on my journey to nowhere as I circled the cell floor like a guinea pig, stopping here and there for a moment or two to identify the scratched names on the door and walls; the simple testimony and reminder that others had been and still were in my position. A certain quality of pride seemed to attach itself to the scrawled names of the tortured writers. They were entitled to be proud, I thought, as I moved off to read the scribbled Gaelic phrases and words, noting the progress of the other wings in the Gaelic classes. "Gaelic classes", I said it again. I sounded rather odd. But then it was odd, considering that it meant standing at the cell door listening to your mate, the teacher, shouting the lesson for the day at the top of his voice from the other end of the wing when the screws happened to be away for their dinner or tea.¹⁴⁶

Bobby Sands explains how Gaelic has become a tool for communicating and warning others of what was going on in the prison:

Screw giving out letters," I yelled in Gaelic at the top of my voice out the door to ease the strained, alerted nerves... it was normal to shout if anyone knew what was going on. It let everyone else know. There was nothing as nerve-racking or as frightening as sitting naked behind a closed door not knowing what was going on when danger was lurking... the screw didn't like Gaelic being shouted about the wing or its use in conversations. It alienated them, made hem feel foreign and even embarrassed them. They didn't know what was being said. They suspected that every word was about them and they weren't too far wrong!¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁷ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 30.

Educational programmes played an important role in shaping Bobby Sands' character and development as a Republican. Denis O'Hearn explains how prisoners started to read more. Prisoners were also keen to get into political discussions and debates. He also describes the important role Denis Donaldson played in educating and lecturing the prisoners. Unlike other prisoners, Donaldson had no interest in football, music, handicrafts or playing cards. Therefore, he spent most of his time reading books, especially books that talk about others' struggles.

Donaldson aimed at giving sense to prisoners of what they do and what they sacrifice their lives to and fight for. The prisoners heard about other struggles in the world such as the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) and the Red Army Faction. Donaldson established the connection between their Irish struggle and what was going on in the world as well. The prisoners started to relate to others' fight for freedom. They even started to read Che Guevara, Sands' favorite, and the Colombian Guerilla priest Camilo Torres.¹⁴⁸

Young Republicans, such as Bobby, started to ask the older prisoners about the struggle. However, the answers they received were not convincing and did not resonate; they were too conservative, too restricted and too limited in its vision of the Irish struggle. Some of the old conservative prisoners supported colonialism in Mozambique and the U.S. in Vietnam, they even supported the apartheid in South Africa.

However, young Republican prisoners like Bobby Sands and his comrades began learning more about the world of politics: they read political books and they

¹⁴⁸ See D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 51.

developed their political consciousness and knowledge. That led them to political debates and more young prisoners joined them. While older conservative prisoners were uptight about their old school of thought and held burning sessions of Marxist books, Bobby and his comrade started reading *Animal Farm*, Franz Fanon and many others. Friends from outside the cages or prison supplied Sands and his comrades with books which contributed in creating their own revolutionary library for their book club.

O'Hearn argues that the more Bobby was radicalised, the less religious he became, and he even stopped attending the mass.¹⁴⁹ Sands believed that educational programmes were the most rewarding activity allowed for prisoners. Moreover, he was indulged in all cultural activities available, such as music, and his brother sent him a guitar and then books of songs to play. Consequently, these educational activities contributed in shaping Sands' character not only on the cultural and political levels, but also contributed to his character as a prolific writer.

This extensive reading about political issues supplied Bobby with a lot to talk about and it also meant he had a clear message, which he would deliver to the Irish people and the world through writing. He had to tell his story as a political Republican prisoner and about the Irish struggle. Sands realised that his country was lying under a great oppression from the British government and the loyalists, and the only form of communication available to him as a prisoner was words and writing. Sands was not aware about many issues in the world of politics, yet he developed a strong sense of political consciousness about what it means to be Nationalist and a Republican.

¹⁴⁹ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, 55.

Bobby wrote to uncover the brutality of the prison regime backed by the British government against the Republican political prisoners.

Gerry Adams, the well-known Irish politician and president of the political party Sinn Fein, was serving time in Long Kesh at the same time as Bobby Sands. Adams was responsible for the intensive educational programme in the cage. He witnessed Bobby's development from an ordinary Irish volunteer in the IRA into a sophisticated Republican and politician. Adams saw Sands' hard work, extensive reading and passion for knowledge. Sands advanced his political theories and he became an unconventional Republican.

As a politician, Adams was aware that the IRA prisoners needed to work hard on their political education. They were in prison for many reasons, such as their sense of national consciousness, or an instinctive patriot, or they were there because the British government oppressed them and their community and they responded. The prisoners recognised their role as Irish nationalist men and they sought a united Ireland. However, they were not ideologically or politically educated. Furthermore, they joined the IRA, yet they were not aware of being Republicans. The leaders of IRA were Republicans, who were politically and ideologically conscious about Republicanism.¹⁵⁰

Reading about Che Guevara and about world's struggles contributed in strengthening the revolutionary spirit Sands had started to develop, stronger than the time before he was admitted to prison. His world started to make logical sense as he started to see his struggle more legitimate, regardless the media campaigns that

¹⁵⁰ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 80.

describe them as a "Mafia" or as "terrorists". They realised that it was part of the British propaganda to dehumanise and demonise their struggle against the British imperialism. With his comrades, Sands discussed and defined their enemy as anti-people and pro-profit rather than by their religion. The educational programme focused on anti-sectarianism. Their enemy was not the enemy because they went to a different church, but because of their imperialist nature which required resistance on a large scale. This political analysis of the struggle was appealing to many of the political prisoners, particularly to Bobby Sands.¹⁵¹ However, many political analysts of the Irish struggle analyse it from a sectarian side, although many IRA members did not believe it was sectarian, rather it was a struggle against an imperialist power. The prisoners decided during their educational programmes that the British government was a group of armed mercenaries and, for that reason, they must become armed revolutionaries.

¹⁵¹ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 82.

4.3. Bobby Sands leading the hunger strike in Long Kesh

There is but one way to halt her and remove the aged enemy and oppressor. Once and for all, the only way! By physical force in the form of armed struggle.¹⁵²

As negotiations with the British government, headed by Thatcher, came to a dead end, Bobby sent documents to each block to consult them on the hunger strike. Denis O'Hearn asserts that in reality, the documents Sands sent to the prisoners in other blocks had the scope to obtain consensus rather than just consultation.¹⁵³ Bobby Sands organised a second hunger strike after the failure of the British government to meet the demands of the Irish political prisoners during the first hunger strike, which was meant to begin on 27 October 1980.

More than a hundred and forty-eight prisoners volunteered for the second hunger strike, where Bobby needed only six. It is well known that some members of the leadership outside the prison was against the idea of a hunger strike, for example, Gerry Adams, one of the most important leader in Sinn, Fein as it would ultimately cost the lives of the Republican political prisoners.

¹⁵² B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 202.

¹⁵³ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 275.

The decision to choose six different hunger strikers, one from each county, was made in order to represent a wide geographical range of Ireland and to widen support among the public. The selection of the nominated strikers was based on the physical and mental health of the prisoners to make sure they would continue the struggle right to the end. In addition, final nominations also included a clear record of the striker from any accusation that could harm the credibility of the hunger strike as the last step to exert pressure onto the British government.

The basic demands of this second hunger strike (which took place in 1981) were the same as the first hunger strike; they were purely political and included the right to wear their ordinary clothes, not do prison work, to be able to freely associate with other prisoners, to hold educational and recreational programs, to have the right to one visit, one letter and one parcel per week, and to restore remission.

It was on 10th October 1980 that the original hunger strike was announced and it would begin on the 27th October 1980. The declaration came from the prisoners who recognised themselves as political prisoners of war and who were going on a hunger strike to demand their rights in political status, and to refuse the criminalisation laws.

We declare that political status is ours of right and we declare that from Monday, October 27, 1980, a hunger strike by a number of men representing H-Block 3, 4 and 5 will commence. Our widely recognised resistance has carried us through four years of immense suffering and it shall carry us through to the bitter climax of death, if necessary.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 280.

Three days before the beginning of the hunger strike, the British government made a concession. It was in relation to the clothing of the prisoners - they could be issued with government-issue uniforms that had a civilian style. According to Bobby Sands and other political prisoners, the British proposal was not sufficient to cut off the hunger strike as it did not meet their demands.

Bobby Sands wrote in one of his press statements how the British government did not even care about the lives of the prisoners, as the government's sole concern was to force the prisoners to conform to its own rules. Sands' statement shows his strong belief and knowledge in human rights, and he believed that the British proposal was a sign of weakness because there was a growing public and international support with the political prisoners:

A cruel piece of teasing and political brinkmanship in an attempt to defuse the momentum and growing support for the blanketmen. They know that the resolution of certain issues will end the H-Block crisis but they continue to avoid them and, to us, they remain suspect..... we the Republican prisoners of H-Blocks 3, 4 and 5, reject as meaningless the substitute, by the British government, of prison issue clothing for prison issue uniform. The wearing of our own clothes we regard as a basic human right and as only one of our five demands... we are not criminals and we are ready and willing to meet an agonizing death on hunger strike to establish we are political prisoners.¹⁵⁵

Thus, the first hunger strike failed and was called off after it had begun as the prisoners received the news that the British government was going to grant them their

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song*, p. 386.

demands. However, after having called off the first hunger strike, the Republican prisoners saw that the British proposal did not meet the hunger strikers' bottom line. Thus, Bobby Sands made up his mind to announce a new hunger strike and lead it himself with other prisoners. The prisoners expressed their anger, frustration, betrayal and sadness when they knew that their leader would start his hunger strike, which would eventually cost him his life.

In his book *Out of Time Irish Republican Prisoners*, Laurence McKeown clarifies the point of difference between the first hunger strike and the second. He argues that the tactics were different. On Sands' first day on hunger-strike, he received little attention from the media. However, on 2 March, Sands' second day of the hunger strike, the Republican prisoners ended their no-wash protest. At this point, the Republican prisoners received more media coverage, as they proved to be flexible. They also did not wish to divert any attention from the hunger strike now led by Bobby Sands. However, media attention was raised even more when Bobby Sands was put forward as a candidate for the Westminster constituency of Fermanagh. Bobby Sands won the election with over 30 000 votes.¹⁵⁶

McKeown explains that the Republican prisoners were pleased with Bobby's victory in the elections. They believed that it would give Bobby a better chance of living, they believed that the British would not want one of their own MP to die on a hunger strike. However, it did not make any difference. It gave huge publicity to their struggle and protest world-wide.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ L. McKeown, *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners Long Kesh 1972-2000*, Colour Books, Dublin, 2001, p. 77.

¹⁵⁷ L. McKeown, *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners*, p. 78.

Sands' decision came from his strong belief that they are political prisoners and, thus, entitled to political status. It also showed his powerful influence on the resistance movement. His writings reflected his determination and steadfastness in fighting for his rights and the rights of his own people. Even in his letters to his family, he proves to be a remarkable writer who knows how to speak his mind and heart, expressing his goals and the means to achieve them for the sake of his comrades and Ireland. He acknowledges the suffering and torture they have to go through, yet they are willing to sacrifice their lives for the future generations of Ireland to be free and liberated from the British colonialism, which denied many generations their freedom.¹⁵⁸

Throughout his imprisonment years, Bobby Sands was concerned about his family, particularly his mother. He often wrote about her and for her. He also wrote beautiful poems dedicated to his mother, such as the following:

Dear Mum
Dear Mum, I know you're always there
To help and guide me with all your care,
You nursed and fed me and made me strong
To face the world and all its wrong.
What can I write to you this day
For – a line or two would never pay
For care and time you gave to me
Through long hard years unceasingly
How you found strength I do not know,
Struggling and striving without a break,
Always there and never late
You prayed for me and loved me more,
And reared me up to be like you,

¹⁵⁸ A revealing example of Bobby Sands' letters is inserted in the last section of this thesis, p. 189.

Bobby expresses in this poem the kindness of his giving mother:

But I haven't a heart as kind as you.
A guide to me in times of plight,
A princess like a star so bright.
For life would never have been the same
If I hadn't learned of what small things came.
So forgive me, Mum, just a little more,
For not loving you so much before,
For life and love you gave to me
I give my thanks for eternity.¹⁵⁹

Bobby Sands wrote his hunger strike diaries during the period from 1st March to 17th March 1981. Each day for two weeks from the beginning of his hunger strike, regardless of his weak condition, he wrote a page or two of his thoughts. He wrote because he believed it was necessary to tell the truth about the reasons why he was taking that road and deciding to go on a hunger strike. He affirmed every day that he was doing it to grant his Irish people the freedom they deserve. It was important for him to write to remind himself every day that the road to freedom is painful, yet worth it.

Again, his hunger strike diaries opened with his concerns about his mother and family for the pain he would cause them with his will to lead the hunger strike himself:

My heart is very sore because I know that I have broken my poor mother's heart, and my home is struck with unbearable anxiety.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 212.

¹⁶⁰ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 219.

He was delighted to know that his mother spoke on a parade in Belfast and he wrote about it on his second day of strike:

I heard that my mother spoke at a parade in Belfast yesterday and that Marcella cried. It gave me heart. I'm not worried about the numbers of the crowds.¹⁶¹

From the first page of his diary, Bobby Sands explained why he was on a hunger strike, so that when people read his writings, they would know how determined he was, and how he fought to obtain his right as a political prisoner for himself and for his comrades:

I am a political prisoner. I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land... I believe I am but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom. I am dying not just to attempt to end the barbarity of H Block, or to gain the rightful recognition of a political prisoner, but primarily because what is lost in here is lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the risen people.¹⁶²

Sands was a distinguished leader among the political prisoners in the H-Block. He proved to have a unique vision of their resistance. He also included women political fighters from the Armagh prison. He addressed them on many occasions, as

¹⁶¹ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 220.

¹⁶² B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 219.

recognition of the important role they play alongside Irish men in the resistance movement. He even mentions them on his first day of hunger strike in his diary. He wrote about their courage and bravery:

I wrote some more notes to the girls in the Amragh today. There is so much I would like to say about them, about their courage, determination and unquenchable spirit of resistance. they are to be what Countess Markievicz, Anne Devlin, Mary Ann McCracken, Marie MacSwiney, Betsy Gray, and those other Irish heroines are to us all. And, of course, I think of Ann Parker, Laura Crawford, Rosemary Bleakeley, and I'm ashamed to say that I cannot remember all their sacred names.¹⁶³

On the radio, Bobby heard Bishop Daly condemning the hunger strike and it disturbed Bobby Sands. Mainly because he detested the double standards as the bishop did not mention anything about the brutal treatment the prisoners get in the prisons by the British government.

On his third day of hunger strike, Bobby had met two reporters, one from *The Guardian* and the second from *The Irish Times*. He wrote that the prison regime placed a table in his cell to put on his food right in front of his eyes, yet he did not care, "I honestly couldn't give a damn if they placed it on my knees. They still keep asking me silly questions like, are you still not eating?"¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, 220.

¹⁶⁴ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 221.

All the readings Sands had over revolutions in the world contributed, as mentioned before, to his revolutionary character. Sands realised that being a true revolutionary meant that you stand beside all the oppressed people in the world regardless of any geographical, linguistic or racial boundaries. Bobby realised that being a revolutionary meant bring a universal revolutionary who stands by the truth. This is clear from his diary when he wrote, on his fourth day on hunger strike, about the Reagan-Thatcher meeting in which they announced plans to counteract Soviet expansionism in Latin America. Reagan, the U.S. President at the time, escalated the U.S troops to support the El Salvadoran government:

I am abreast with the news and view with utter disgust and anger the Reagan/Thatcher plot. It seems quite clear that they intend to counteract Russian expansionism with imperialist expansionism, to protect their vital interests they say. What they mean is they covet other nations' resources. They want to steal what they haven't got and to do so (as the future may unfortunately prove) they will murder oppressed people and deny them their sovereignty as nations. No doubt Mr. Haughey will toe the line in Ireland when Thatcher so demands.¹⁶⁵

Ironically, Bobby Sands wrote on the same page, on which he criticised the American and British policies of colonisation and tempting the oppressed people in return of colonial interests, about the new and bigger portions of food the prison regime left for him, as if they were trying to tempt him and drive him to surrender. It seems symbolic that they employed the same strategies against the oppressed around the world to achieve their colonial interests:

¹⁶⁵ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 222.

...noticed a rarity today, jam with the tea, and by the way the screws are glaring at the food, they seem in need of it more than my good self...they are not embarrassed by the enormous amount of food they are putting into the cell and I know they have every bean and chip counted or weighed.¹⁶⁶

On his sixth day of hunger strike, Bobby heard the news about a young girl of twenty-one years old who was sentenced to twenty years of imprisonment for shooting a police officer from RUC. Despite his distress about the news, his spirits remained high and this type of news made him only more encouraged to go on:

I have no doubts or regrets about what I am doing for I know what I have faced for eight years, and in particular for the last four-and-a-half years, others will face, young lads and girls still at school, or young Gerard or Kevin (Bobby's son and nephew, respectively) and thousands of others. They will not criminalise us, rob us out of our true identity, steal our individualism, depoliticise us, churn us out as systemised, institutionalised, decent law-abiding robots. Never will they label our liberation struggle as criminal. I am amazed at the British logic. Never in eight centuries have they succeeded in breaking the spirit of one man who refused to be broken. They have not dispirited, conquered, or demoralized my people, nor will they ever.¹⁶⁷

After one week of hunger strike, it was Bobby's twenty-seventh birthday. His comrades organised a concert for him to keep his spirits up. He realised earlier that there was a high possibility that he would die, but he had no regrets. On the contrary, he felt happy and freer than ever. He knew that he may die, but that the Irish Republic

¹⁶⁶ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁷ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 224.

would never die. His writing talent is evident even in his worst conditions during his hunger strike. The clarity of his ideas and the ideology he developed during his imprisonment experience shaped his writing:

In a few hours time I shall be twenty-seven grand years of age. Paradoxically it will be a happy enough birthday; perhaps that's because I am free in spirit. I can offer no other reason... well, I have gotten by twenty-seven years, so that is something. I may die, but the Republic of 1916 will never die. Onward to the Republic and liberation of our people. ¹⁶⁸

Sands repeatedly condemned both the British government's denial of the political status to the Republican prisoners, and their criminalisation laws. He wondered how the love of one's own country could criminalise the free men. He wondered why the Irish are deprived from their right to resist any occupation while it is a granted right to other people in the world:

We wish to be treated not as ordinary prisoners for we are not criminals. We admit no crime unless, that is, the love of one's people and country is a crime. Would Englishmen allow Germans to occupy their nation or French-men allow Dutchmen to do likewise? We Republican prisoners understand better than anyone the plight of all prisoners who are deprived of their liberty... indeed in the past, all prisoners have gained from the resistance of Republican jail struggles... the struggle in the prisons goes hand-in-hand with the continuous freedom struggle in Ireland. Many Irishmen have given their lives in pursuit of this freedom is achieved. ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 227.

¹⁶⁹ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 229.

Throughout the pages of his diaries while on hunger strike, Sands mentioned James Connolly several times¹⁷⁰ Bobby saw Connolly as an idol and looked up to him; he was an iconic symbol for the Irish revolutionaries. Remembering Connolly kept Sands stronger and relieved:

I always keep thinking of James Connolly, and the great calm and dignity that he showed right to his very end, his courage and resolve. Perhaps I am biased, because there have been thousands like him, but Connolly has always been the man that I looked up to... I was trying to piece together a quote from James Connolly today which I'm ashamed that I did not succeed in doing but I'll paraphrase the meager few lines I can remember. They go something like this: a man who is bubbling over with enthusiasm (or patriotism) for his country, who walks through the streets among his people, their degradation, poverty, and suffering, and who (for want of the right words) does nothing, is, in my mind, a fraud; for Ireland distinct from its people is but a mass of chemical elements.¹⁷¹

Bobby Sands endured all the pain, for, whenever he felt weak, he had a voice in his head reminding him not to give in, reminding him of beautiful things he loved, such as birds, especially his favorite bird the lark:

The weariness is slowly creeping in, and my heart is willing but my body wants to be lazy, so I have decided to mass all my energy and thoughts into consolidating my resistance. That is most important. Nothing else seems to matter except that lingering constant reminding thought, 'never give up'. No matter how bad, how black, how

¹⁷⁰ James Connolly was an Irish Republican and a socialist leader. He was executed by a British firing squad for taking part in the Easter Rising 1916 to end the British rule and establish a United Republic of Ireland.

¹⁷¹ B. Sands, *Writings from prison*, pp. 228-230.

painful, how heart-breaking, 'never give up', never despair, never lose hope. Let the bastards laugh at you all they want, let them grin, allow them to persist in their humiliation, brutality, deprivations, vindictiveness, petty harassments, let them laugh now, because all of that is no longer important or worth a response... unlike their laughs and jibes, our laughter will be the joy of victory and the joy of the people, our revenge will be the liberation of all and the final defeat of the oppressors of our aged nation.¹⁷²

The prison experience made Sands mature quickly. He grew more as he learned a lesson from everyone and everything that came his way. He grew more faithful and confident in the Irish resistance and the liberation of Ireland:

I have always taken a lesson from something that was told me by a sound man, that is, that everyone, Republican or otherwise, has his own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small, no one is too old or too young to do something. There is that much to be done that no select or small portion of people can do, only the greater mass of the Irish nation will ensure the achievement of the Socialist Republic, and that can only be done by hard work and sacrifice.¹⁷³

The prison regime, Sands explains in his diaries, continued its harassment even though he was on the hunger strike. He explains how one particular officer enjoyed torturing him. While another official commented on the book Sands was

¹⁷² B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 232.

¹⁷³ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 235.

reading on his seventeenth day on hunger strike: "I see you're reading a short book, it's a good thing it isn't a long one for you won't finish it." ¹⁷⁴

Tuesday 17th March was the last page Sands wrote on his diaries. Up to the last lines of his diaries, he stressed the importance of freedom and resistance. He seemed hopeful to the last moment that the Irish people will win the struggle:

The mind is the most important. But where does this proper mentality stem from? Perhaps from one's desire for freedom. It isn't certain that that's where it comes from. If they aren't able to destroy the desire for freedom, they won't break you. They won't break me because the desire for freedom and the freedom of the Irish people is in my heart. The day will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show. It is then we'll see the rising of the moon. ¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 238.

¹⁷⁵ B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 239.

4.4. Bobby Sands, the writer

As mentioned before, Bobby Sands was an important writer. Inspired by his love for his own country and people, by the difficult times he lived, and also by the beauty of the rich countryside where he used to take long walks, Bobby started writing. At first he wrote only short essays and poems. However, his writing improved and developed into longer essays and poems. He also wrote short stories and poems under the pen name Mercella, his sister's name. They were published in the *Republican News*.¹⁷⁶ His writing impressed a huge range of audiences; he had a talent that captured many literary readers. What is especially significant about his writing is that he produced them in the very harsh condition of the prison. Basically, he used to write in a filthy cell on toilet roll and/or on rice paper or cigarettes roll-up with a biro pen which he kept hidden inside his body.

Sands wrote during the last four years of his life. He wrote about his prison experience and about the Republican political prisoners. He wrote about his determination to continue their struggle for freedom. He also wrote of resistance to the British colonialism. Gerry Adams describes Bobby's writing as a flow of painful, personal tragedy behind the walls of the prison. He explains that his sentiments for his oppressed comrades manifested in the words he wrote. According to Adams, Bobby lives through the pages he left in his *Writing from Prison* and through many powerful poems he wrote, such as *The Rhythm of Time*, *H Block Trilogy*, *The Ballad of*

¹⁷⁶ See G. Adams foreword to B. Sands, *Writings From Prison*, p. 11.

Reading Gaol and many others. Some of his poems were turned into songs and recorded by Christy Moore.

There is a premonition of personal tragedy running through his writings: that his H Block cell will, literally, become a tomb. His admiration for his comrades and his feelings for supporters and for oppressed people outside of prison emerge in the words which he expertly uses as a weapon against a regime which tries vainly to break and dehumanize him. Bobby's diary is a unique piece of literature, his last written words.¹⁷⁷

Gerry Adams had a great influence on Bobby Sands on many levels, not only political, but also cultural. Bobby regarded him as a role model. Adams published a series of articles in the *Republican News*, and through these, Bobby Sands learned from Gerry that the written word is also a tool for expressing struggle and resistance. Bobby's cultural studies transformed him into a strong believer of socialist revolution, which makes him a distinguished IRA member. He also believed in political mobilisation.

¹⁷⁷ G. Adams foreword to B. Sands, *Writings From Prison*, p. 11.

4.5. Bobby Sands and cinema: *Hunger* (2008) by Steve McQueen

Hunger (2008) was directed by the British director Steve McQueen and starred Michael Fassbender. *Hunger* tells the story of Bobby Sands (Fassbender), and his hunger strike of 1981. The film depicts the last six weeks of Sands' life. It shows, to a great extent, the last days of Bobby Sands, his ideas about resistance and his determination to be recognised as a political prisoner, as well as the torture he had suffered with his Republican comrades inside the Maze. *Hunger* is based on a script written by Enda Walsh and McQueen. In addition, the film reflects in many ways on the nature of the British-Irish conflict in Northern Ireland but without taking any stance.

Hunger was awarded several times. Most importantly, it acclaimed the Camera d'Or in Cannes Film Festival 2008. Also, it won the Sydney Film Prize at the Sydney Film Festival, and the Belgian Syndicate of Cinema Critics' Grand Pix, among many others.

In an interview by David Gritten, Steve McQueen explains that his decision was to tell the story of Bobby Sands. Therefore, the film is not meant to be an art film, though its structure is similar to films classed as 'art films'. Although the context is political, the film is about the people and their reaction to what politicians design for them.

The context is political, absolutely, but it's about what people have to deal with, once politicians have presented them with a situation. I'm interested in the people who

have to live and work at making an extraordinary situation ordinary and the Maze prison was an extraordinary place.¹⁷⁸

In another interview upon winning the European Discovery award 2008, McQueen explains that his interest in Bobby Sands started at the age of eleven. At the time, he saw a photo of a man with a number indicating the days he had been on hunger strike. He asked his mother about him, and she told him that Sands stopped eating in order to be heard. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that not eating makes a voice louder.¹⁷⁹

The film has an unusual structure – it is split into three parts. The first part of the film is forty minutes in length and contains very little dialogue. It follows the daily life of a prison guard, Raymond Lohan, and his uneasy working days in the Maze. In addition, it describes the arrival of a new IRA member who refuses to conform and he gets a harsh treatment from the very first day in the Maze. Thus, this section shows the conditions inside the prison. The final part of the film focuses on Bobby Sands' hunger strike and how his condition deteriorates, until, in the last days, he enters a hallucinatory state.

Michael Fassbender, a German-born who moved with his family at the age of two to Killarney, portrayed the wasting body of Bobby Sands by fasting under a medical supervision. He underwent the fasting in Los Angeles, and his diet consisted

¹⁷⁸ D. Gritten, *Shame: Steve McQueen Interview*, 12 January, 2012, on www.telegraph.co.uk, retrieved: 17 June, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ F. Lett, interview with Steve McQueen, December 2008, Copenhagen, on www.europeanfilmacademy.org, retrieved: 24 July, 2015.

of nuts, berries and sardines for ten weeks. The change in the actor's body which turns into a skeletal one is evident in the last part.

A central scene takes place between Sands and a priest (played by Liam Cunningham) with some remarkable dialogue. In the scene, Sands faces the priest across a table between the two men. The priest is supposed to announce the hunger strike to the world. Sands talks about the importance of the hunger strike while the priest tries to change Sands' mind, and, in an attempt to call off the strike, he talks about the importance of living rather than dying for the cause. The priest also tries to play the pride and ego cards and discusses the morality of the hunger strike. This scene was shot in one long take; it is believed to be the longest single take in the history of cinema. The dialogue extends to almost twenty two minutes.¹⁸⁰

During the New York screening, McQueen described how difficult it was to produce the right take for this scene, as the whole film depends on this central conversation. Accordingly, the success of *Hunger* relied on the successful atmosphere produced in the exchange between Bobby Sands and the priest. To ensure the two actors deliver the right take, Liam Cunningham moved in with Fassbender for a week before they shot the scene. The film concentrates on stimulating the senses in a unique way rarely found in other films. Whether the scene was dealing with the torture and humiliations of the prisoners, or the blanket protest, or the significant conversation scene with the priest, all senses seem to be involved in the film *Hunger*:

¹⁸⁰ D. O'Kelly, *The Pain and Beauty of Hunger*, February/ March 2009, on www.irishamerica.com, retrieved: 4 August, 2015.

It was about looking at the footage with the actors, discussing and talking with the actors and rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing... Not letting it take off, just leaving it on the runway, to a point where it wasn't a case of acting or a case of presenting, it was a case of being. That is what I wanted; I wanted the acting to be a sphere, you could roll it this way or that way, wherever you roll it, it is a sphere, it is perfect.¹⁸¹

Motivated to give a voice to Bobby Sands, the scene between Sands and the priest serves this purpose. It is a simple scene, with a simple setting: two men talking. This makes the audience pay more attention to this fundamental conversation. In his interview by Frederikke Lett in Copenhagen, McQueen explains how some people think that this scene is only five or six minutes long, not realising that it is actually twenty two minutes long. McQueen also comments on the length of the scene by describing how the audience feels the real time, not just the film time.¹⁸²

The film also covers the blanket protest in a very graphic way. For the first ten minutes, no words are uttered. McQueen was interested in researching the world in which Bobby Sands lived and to transform this world into graphic images in his cinematic adaptation without wasting too many words on dialogues. He managed to produce and recreate the brutal images in the Maze, while, at the same time, not losing insight over the philosophical themes in the film about resistance, fighting for one's ideas, and endurance. The film depicted the last site of protest for Bobby Sands, it does not occur outside in the real world, it occurs on his own body, which becomes his arena of protest.

¹⁸¹ D. O'Kelly, *The Pain and Beauty of Hunger*.

¹⁸² F. Lett interview with McQueen.

Declan O’Kelly quotes McQueen on the director's decision to make *Hunger*, in an article which appeared in March 2009 in the journal *Irish America* entitled “The Pain and Beauty of Hunger”. McQueen explained in November 2008, on a round-table after the screening of *Hunger* for the New York Film Festival, that he was looking for images to screen beyond the blunt words; he was looking for what was in between the lines in relation to the historical context, politics, environment of the prison, alongside the smell. All that contributed to recreating the experience Sands lived through for almost four years and a half. On the other hand, McQueen was interested in showing what the prison officers had to go through in this extraordinary place, the Maze, then having to go home after work to lead a normal life.¹⁸³

The film was screened in many cinemas in the world, particularly in the United Kingdom, and was considered to be controversial. It produced many heated debates; however, it was infact McQueen's intention to create and provoke a debate over the issue of hunger among the public, to get the people involved and engaged in the film as it is, after all, about the life of a human being. Also, the director intended to challenge the audience's morality over hunger strikes. At the London premiere, Liam Cunningham told *The Guardian* that they tried to honor what Sands stood for and the horrendous conditions and humiliations he had to go through to fight for his commitment to his country regardless whether they agree or disagree with the film's interpretation of the truth.

¹⁸³ F. Lett interview with McQueen.

Hunger is praised for its accuracy in many ways, especially with regard to the treatment of the prisoners and the protests. This accuracy was achieved due to the films crew's research into the events that took place in Northern Ireland. In addition, they received generous help from the Bobby Sands Trust that keeps all pictures and writings on Bobby Sands. They also interviewed some former and surviving hunger strikers and former prison officers.

As for the question regarding whether the film did justice to Bobby Sands or not, many believe it did. This includes Laurence McKeown, who was a Republican prisoner himself in the Long Kesh prison and spent seventy days on hunger strike in 1981, and the author of the significant book *Out of Time Irish Republican Prisoners Long Kesh 1972-2000*. In his review of the film, which was published in the Ireland's history magazine *History Ireland* in 2009, McKeown affirms that the film does justice to Bobby Sands and the others who died on hunger strike. He notes that the film is not a documentary, thus it is not possible to include all that happened into its 96 minutes. However, he believes that McQueen managed to capture the truth and reality of what it was like in the H-Blocks, and the decision of Bobby Sands to start a hunger strike. Many other critics assert that McQueen broke many of the rules known and applied in the film-making process. The camera moves on the scenes where nothing much happens, and, as mentioned before, there is no dialogue in the first part. However, this attracts the eyes to the setting of the prison where events take place; it also shows insight to the lives of the prisoners and the officers in this miserable prison.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ L. McKeown, *Film Eye: Hunger*, *History Ireland*, volume 17, issue 1 jan/feb 2009, on www.historyireland.com, retrieved: 26 September, 2015.

The Guardian also praised the film, affirming that *Hunger* is a "mood piece" rather than just a strict and direct history of the hunger strike. However, the film also provided an impressive historical balance and "haunting effect".¹⁸⁵

The film and Sands' diaries are graphic. Bobby Sands wrote a lot about the torture, the filth, the humiliation, the cavity searches, and the violence inflicted on the Republican prisoners. On a parallel level, the film portrayed the brutal treatment the Republican prisoners faced for years by the prison officers. The film also depicted the murders of some of the prison officers by the IRA paramilitaries during the hunger strike.

From the beginning of the film, the director makes it clear that Bobby Sands was denied his rights to be recognised as a political prisoner. The film opens with a prison officer getting ready to go to work. He checks under his car for fear of a bomb, he washes his wounded knuckles in a sink. He smokes a cigarette in the cold snowy weather outside, yet his shirt is full of sweat stains. Then appears the voice of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher saying her famous statement: "There's no such thing as political murder, political bombing or political violence. There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing, criminal violence, we will not compromise on this. There will be no political status". From the beginning of the movie, it was made clear that Sands was not heard by the Thatcher government, even after he had begun his hunger protest; he was dealing with an iron government that did not listen to the plight of the Irish people by refusing to negotiate.

¹⁸⁵ A.Von Tunzelmann, *Hunger: A Mood Piece with Impressive Historical Balance*, 6 March, 2014, on www.theguardian.com, retrieved: 8 July, 2015.

In a way, the film is authentic and faithful to Bobby Sands diaries. It depicted the miserable life the Republican prisoners had led inside the Maze. In his diaries, Sands described all details of his imprisonment and the harsh treatment. McQueen managed, with sparse words, to deliver the sense of suffering Sands had during the last weeks of his life. *Hunger* also succeeded in its graphic images to deliver the experience inside the Maze, with few words, leaving nothing else to imagination.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to analyse different elements and themes in the writings of Ghassan Kanafani and Bobby Sands. Focusing on Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa and Men in the Sun*, and Sands' *Writings from Prison*. Themes of resistance and the development of revolutionary characters were explored and analysed. On the other hand, a thorough investigation of their cinematic representations was conducted focusing on Qasem Hawal's *Return to Haifa*, Tawfiq Salih's *The Duped* and Steve McQueen's *Hunger*. This thesis also aims to define the notion of the literature of resistance, its beginnings and its role in the Palestinian and Irish resistance movements. In fact, the definition of resistance literature and its defining parameters revealed that there is a pioneering and powerful political role assigned to it, as writing turns out to be a tool in the cultural resistance through its use of symbols, characters and metaphors. Also, these examples of literature of resistance essentially emerged as part of a response to, and against the oppression of, the Israeli occupation of Palestine and against the British colonialism in Northern Ireland.

The question of the development of the revolutionary character in resistance literature led to a consideration of the historical and political contexts that shaped this type of writing and its characters. An exploration into the literature of resistance and its cinema proved to be of great value since resistance writing has not yet received sufficient study around the world, and has been one sided so far as we have only seen the media's version. The thesis also investigates the themes of identity, loss and exile throughout the selected texts. Ghassan Kanafani wrote about the Palestinian resistance, the loss of land and the consequent identity problem. He explored how the

constant attempts to uproot Palestinians from their houses, accompanied by the loss of the home country, posed threats on the Palestinian identity. In exploring the theme of resistance in *Returning to Haifa*, the critical analysis of the theme of identity was taken into account. This also involved an analysis of the representation of the "other" character in this narrative.

Through the analysis and exploration of Kanafani's work and life as an intellectual and a revolutionary, it became clear that he had a deep and relentless commitment to the Palestinian case. His political consciousness and his ideological development, along with his visions, hopes, disappointment and feelings throughout the different stages of his life and the historical progress of the Palestinian case, were reflected in his characters. Moreover, as discussed in the second and third chapters, his narratives reflect each stage of the Palestinian resistance and nationalist movements.

In *Returning to Haifa*, Khalid suggests a direct invitation to take arms and resist the occupier. Meanwhile, his father Said S. , the protagonist, represents a disappointed generation that lost their home country. This narrative proposed an answer to the question of home or homeland. The concept of homeland materialises inside the young man's (Khalid) determination to fight and resist. In fact, at the end of the narrative, Said S. realises what it means to be a Palestinian. He recognises his true identity, and his journey to visit his house after twenty years offers him the opportunity to find his true self, which lies in the future of resistance to restore and return to his home country. Moreover, Said realises that his home is not in the past or in his memories of the objects inside his house. His son Khalid represents a role model of a revolutionary character that knows his true identity and the true notion of

"home". Home means to join the freedom fighters, to refuse to be passive in the national struggle; through this Khalid portrays the essence of the resistance.

As for *Writings from Prison*, Sands' identity is seen in his plight for freedom and liberation from the British colonialism. Moreover, his identity is manifested in his struggle for free expression and equal rights for all Irish people. Sands' idea of home is a free state of Ireland and freedom to speak his Irish tongue.

Particular attention was paid to the *Nakba* 1948 and its influence on the literary production in Arabic language. In the Palestinian literature, *Nakba* was dealt in relation to the collective memory of Palestinians. Thus, literature has become a means of responding to the traumatic collective memory of the 1948; it responds to the attempts of the cancellation of the Palestinian cultural memory. In this context, trauma was defined in light of what happened in Palestine in 1948. The examination of the trauma offered two types of trauma: the collective trauma represented in the Palestinian exodus, and the individual trauma represented in the loss of the son (Said S. and Safiyya's son) in *Returning to Haifa*.

Kanafani had a strong belief that literature and all types of artistic expression had a powerful message and it could be an effective tool in conveying its messages to the people and invite them into taking part in the resistance nationalist movements. This also suggests that cinema is considered an inspiring part in the cultural resistance. It is worth mentioning that Kanafani was also an artist and he produced some significant paintings (see the appendix) dealing with the Palestinian identity and culture which contributes in the preservation of the Palestinian heritage.

On the other hand, Bobby Sands represented the average Irish young man in search for freedom from the British colonialism of Northern Ireland. In *Writings from Prison*, Sands showed a strong determination to fight his struggle to obtain his political rights inside and outside the prison, even if it was to cost him his life. His diaries portray a man committed to his own resistance and people. Moreover, his diaries showed a very prolific writer with powerful writing and communication skills. His intelligence was sharpened through his intensive readings and the courses that were organised inside the prison.

Both Ghassan Kanafani and Bobby Sands considered writing as a platform of expression for their struggles. Both writers managed with their nationalist writings to bring an insight into the threats of the Israeli occupation and the British colonialism on their people's political and cultural lives. They also managed to bring about their people and unite them for resistance. Kanafani's characters such as Khalid and Faris Al-Lubda in *Returning to Haifa*, take upon themselves the responsibility and commitment to fight for their homelands. Meanwhile, Sands was himself an example of resistance, as he was committed to his own country and started his hunger strike which ultimately cost him his life.

The study was conducted in the light of trauma, colonial, post colonial and resistance theories, and was based on textual critical analysis. Exploring the theme of resistance, the analysis of the literary texts and cinematic work could not be carried out without a thorough reflection on the socio-political contexts of the Palestinian and Irish struggles.

A short Glossary

Nakba :	the Palestinian catastrophe, 1948.
Naksa :	the Arab setback, 1967.
Black September :	the Jordanian Civil War which started in September 1970 and ended in July 1971. On one side the PLO led by Yassir Arafat, and the other side was the Jordanian Armed Forces led by King Hussein. This conflict was to determine Jordan's rule whether to continue under the Hashemite Monarchy or to be taken over by the PLO.
PLO:	Palestine Liberation Organisation founded in 1964 and recognised as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.
Arab Nationalist Movement:	a pan-Arabist and revolutionary nationalist organisation famous in the Arab world, and especially among Palestinian movements. Its ideology is based on socialism and anti-imperialism.
PFLP :	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a secular revolutionary organization founded in 1967 by George Habash, who also served as secretary general of the Front.
Haganah:	Jewish militia (1920-1948). It was founded as a military organization under the British mandate of Palestine as a defense force to defend the Jewish communities. On May 26, 1948, after the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel, the militia was transformed into the official Israeli Defense Force.

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Appendix



Figure 1: Ghassan Kanafani, Palestine.

The painting shows the name "Palestine" in Arabic, with lines of Arabic artistic designs and embroidery, which is used in traditional clothes, indicating a rich history of cultural heritage. It also includes the colours of the Palestinian flag (red, green, white and black), a symbol of the Palestinian cause.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.thaqafa.org/site/pages/details.aspx?itemid=398#.VoUiKbbhDMx>

16 October 2015.



Figure 2: Ghassan Kanafani, Al-Hisan wal Burda ("The Horse and the Carpet").

This painting depicts a horse that seems to be of an Arabian breed, due its distinctive head shape and high tail carriage. The horse represents the revolution. On the back of the horse is an oriental Arabian carpet, as cultural heritage is a source of inspiration for intellectuals like Kanafani. Horses in Arab culture reflect the knighthood and courage.

Retrieved from the Ghassan Kanafani's website:

<http://www.ghassankanafani.com/english/painten.html>

5 October, 2015.

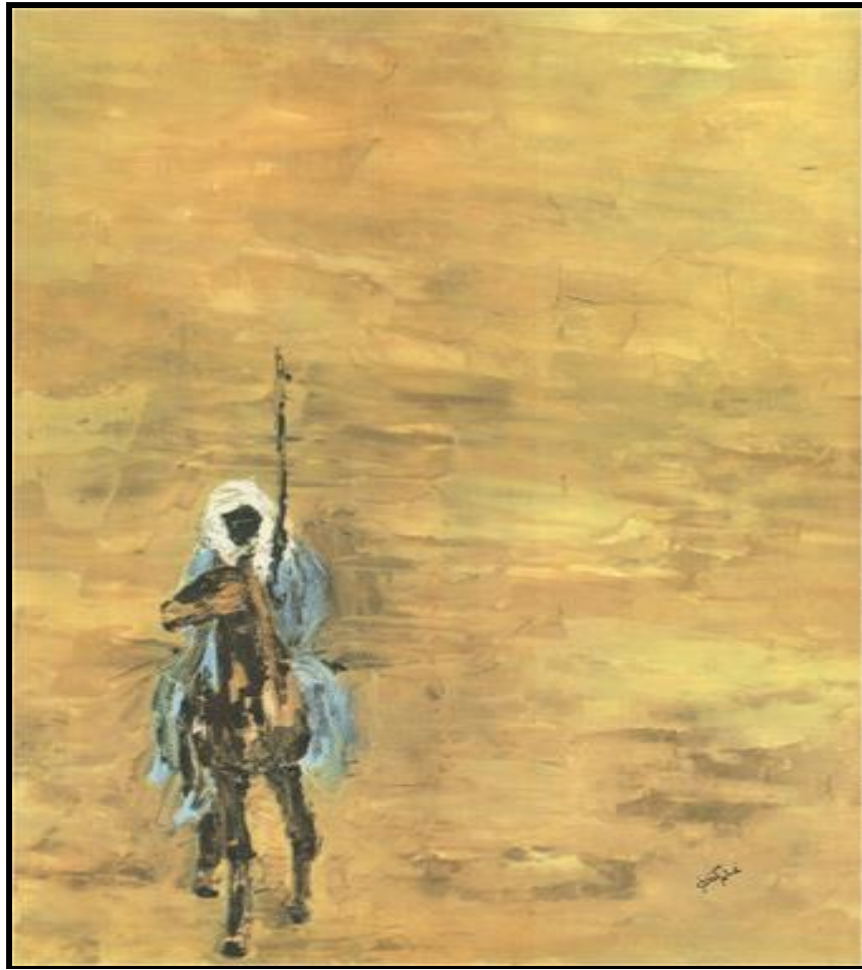


Figure 3: Ghassan Kanafani, The Horseman (oil on canvas).

The painting shows an Arab man on his horse dressed in a traditional Arab beduoin clothes.

Retrieved from:

http://www.resistanceart.com/Ghassan_Kanafani.htm

5 October, 2015.

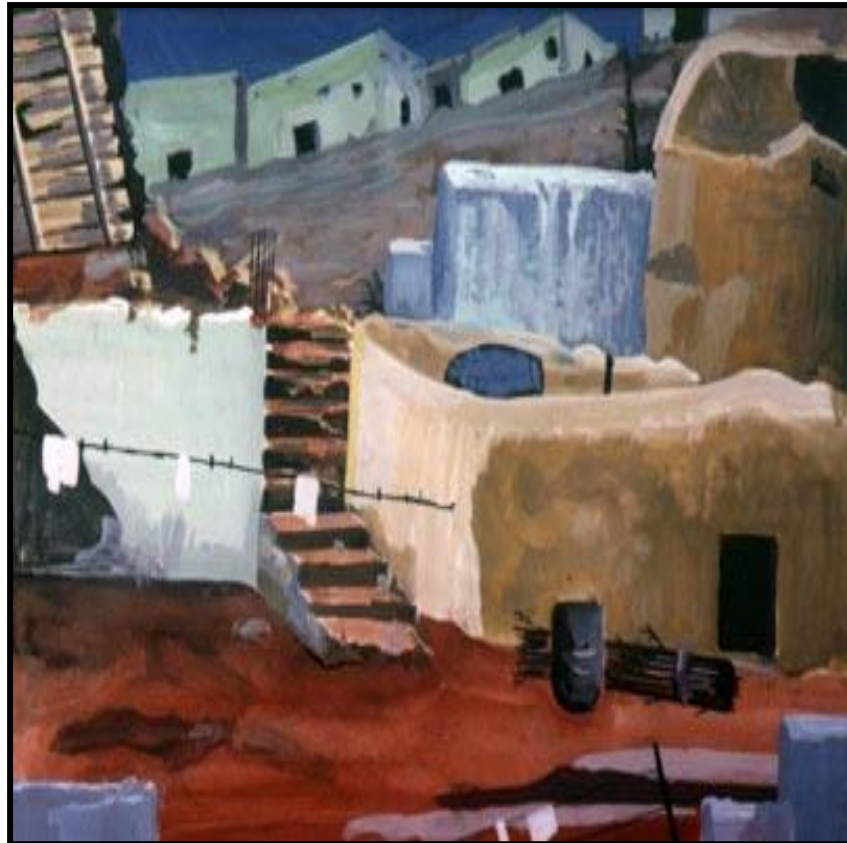


Figure 4: Ghassan Kanafani, *Jibal wa Thakira* ("Mountains and Memory")

This painting depicts a typical Palestinian village with natural colours for the land and for the houses. Kanafani recalls all that is left in his memory from his hometown Acre.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.thaqafa.org/site/pages/details.aspx?itemid=398#.VoUiKbbhDM>
[x](#)

5 October, 2015.



Figure 5: Ghassan Kanafani, *Untitled*.

This painting shows a Palestinian woman sewing a piece of cloth, and the word "Palestine" is written in Arabic at the top of the painting. Kanafani regarded Palestine as the mother of all Palestinians. He also dedicated many of his literary works to Palestinian mothers who are strong and steadfast regardless of the occupation. It is believed that the women he drew represented Um Sa'ad, one of his relatives who lived in a refugee camp, who also inspired Kanafani to write his famous novella "*Um Sa'ad*".

Retrieved from Ghassan Kanafani's website:

<http://www.ghassankanafani.com/english/painten.html>

5 October, 2015.



Figure 6: Ghassan Kanafani, Untitled

Another representation of a Palestinian woman.

Retrieved from Kanafani's website:

<http://www.ghassankanafani.com/english/painten.html>

5 October, 2015.



Figure 7: Ghassan Kanafani, Nisa' Al-Nakba ("Women of the Nakba")

This is illustrating desperate faces of women during the exodus. The dominant colour is the black, except for the white colour of the head covering of the Palestinian women. It is a representation of the suffering of women.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.thaqafa.org/site/pages/details.aspx?itemid=398#.VoUiKbbhDMx>

16 October, 2015.



Figure 8: Ghassan Kanafani, Rajul Yartadi Qumbaz ("Man wearing Qumbaz")

A representation of loss, sadness, suffering and homesickness in a Palestinian man wearing the traditional male rob called Qumbaz in a dark colour. It is a representation of the Palestinian tragedy.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.thaqafa.org/site/pages/details.aspx?itemid=398#.VoUiKbbhDMx>

16 October, 2015.



Figure 9: Ghassan Kanafani, *Rajul Masloub b l-Waqt* ("Man Crucified by Time")

This is a symbolic representation of the Palestinian as a victim crucified and tortured like Jesus Christ, an inspiration from the story of Jesus who comes from the Palestinian city Al-Nasira (Nazareth). The painting portrays the tragic destiny of Palestinians throughout different periods of time.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.thaqafa.org/site/pages/details.aspx?itemid=398#.VoUiKbbhDMx>

16 October, 2015.

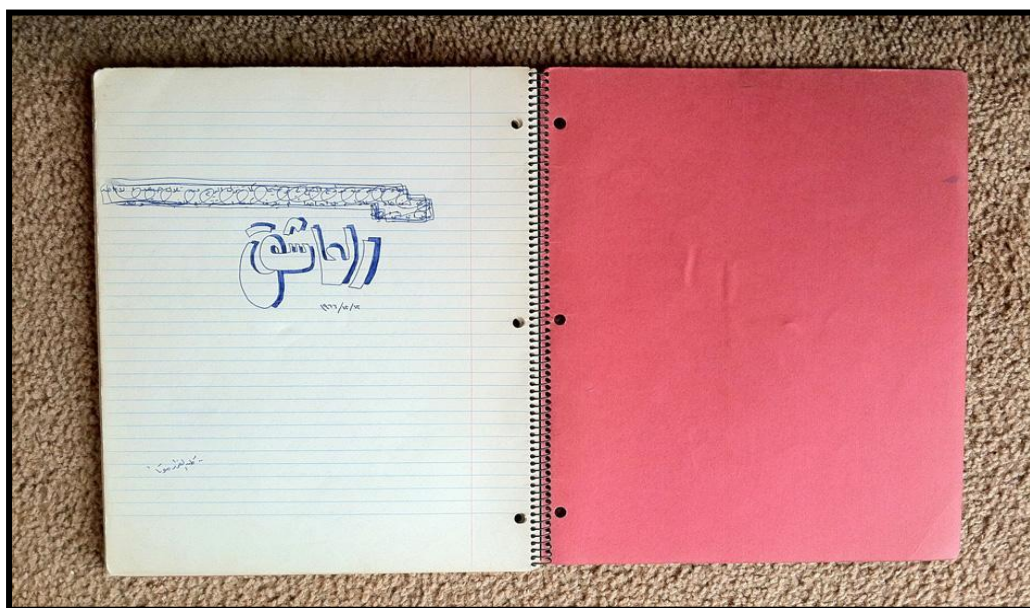


Figure 10: First page of Ghassan Kanafani's original manuscript of his novel *Al-Ashiq* ("The Lover"). This manuscript was found in Kanafani's cabinet in his house.

Retrieved from: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16358>

5 November, 2015.

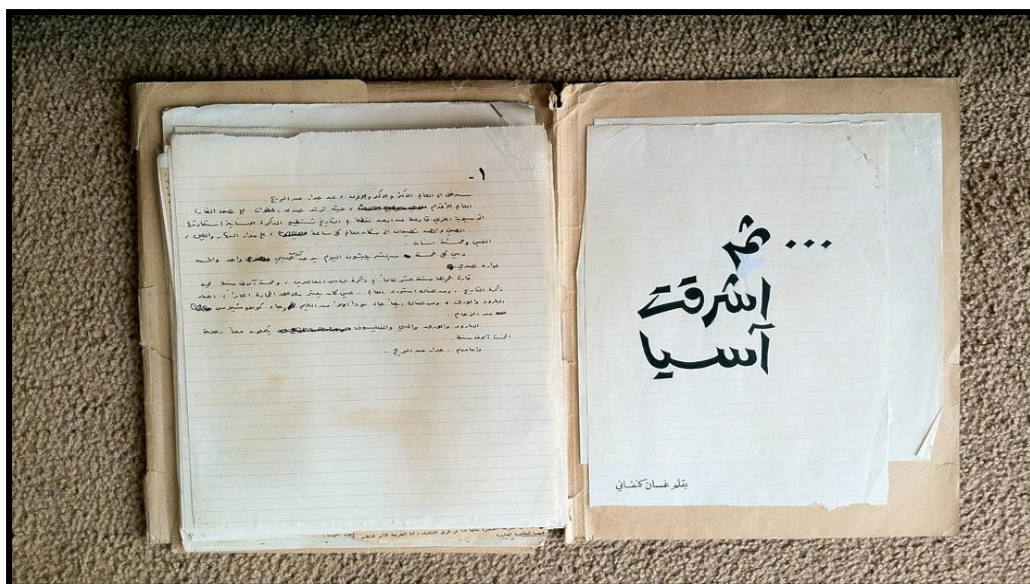


Figure 11: Original manuscript of Kanafani's *Thuma Ashraqar Asia* ("And Then Asia Rose").

Retrieved from: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16358>

5 November, 2015.

"My dear father and mother,

By now you will be most disturbed at what is to take place. I do not want to make you anxious or cause you any more pain. What I told you on the visit I must make sure you understand.

It is not joy to any one of us here to have to embark upon another hunger-strike. All of us realise and understand too well the consequences involved and the torment endured by all the families but we have no alternative – we have tried every conceivable means to avoid this action and to end this protest.

The Brits are cruel – they are devious and callous. They are trying to cloud the real situation by saying or implying that they are moving to solve the issue and that we are unreasonable. But in fact they have only changed the colour and style of the prison uniform. The whole regime is as rotten as it ever was and we can live here in the H-Blocks for the duration of our sentences and face unparalleled inhumanities, torture, and eventual insanity. Or we can fight back with all we have left - our lives. We would prefer to fight even if it means to death.

Please try to remember I won't be on my own – there will be others – maybe not as many as the first time but that is our decision. It is time for us all to stand up and be brave. I know this may be particularly hard for you and my family but you will have to bear up to it and stand by me all the way. There is nothing I would be afraid of except I should die with my own family opposed to my actions.

Last Christmas was my ninth Christmas here in prison. I've lost a lot because of it, including the wife I love and the son I love. Even so I would go back again tomorrow and fight because I'm not foolish, I'm not wild. I'm intelligent, responsible and hold ideals that generations have died for. I do not enjoy prison. I do not enjoy the thought of death. I have lost many close comrades – all my mates are in goal or dead.

So please try and understand. I love the two of you very dearly. I am sorry if I caused you worry and anxiety for so long. I am sorry if I am doing so again, but I must.

The Brits will try and move on you and use you to try and break me. Therefore, I need you to stand by me. Speak to no one except to say you back our stand and that you know and have seen England's treatment of Irishmen. See the boys at the Centre – they will keep you right at all times. You should listen to them and help them as best you can.

Please understand that the hunger-strike is our decision – not the IRA or anyone else. Remember that regardless of what may occur the blame for this situation and for what may develop out of it lies roundly on the shoulders of the Brits.

I will write to Bernadette and Marcella and Sean. I'm feeling very bad mainly because I worry that you may break down and ask me to end the hunger-strike. But I know you can be strong – I will go on regardless and die with that in mind.

Remember I love you all very much.

Your loving son, Bobby "

Letter from Bobby Sands to his family, quoted in J. Feehan, *Bobby Sands and the Tragedy of Northern Ireland*, p. 116

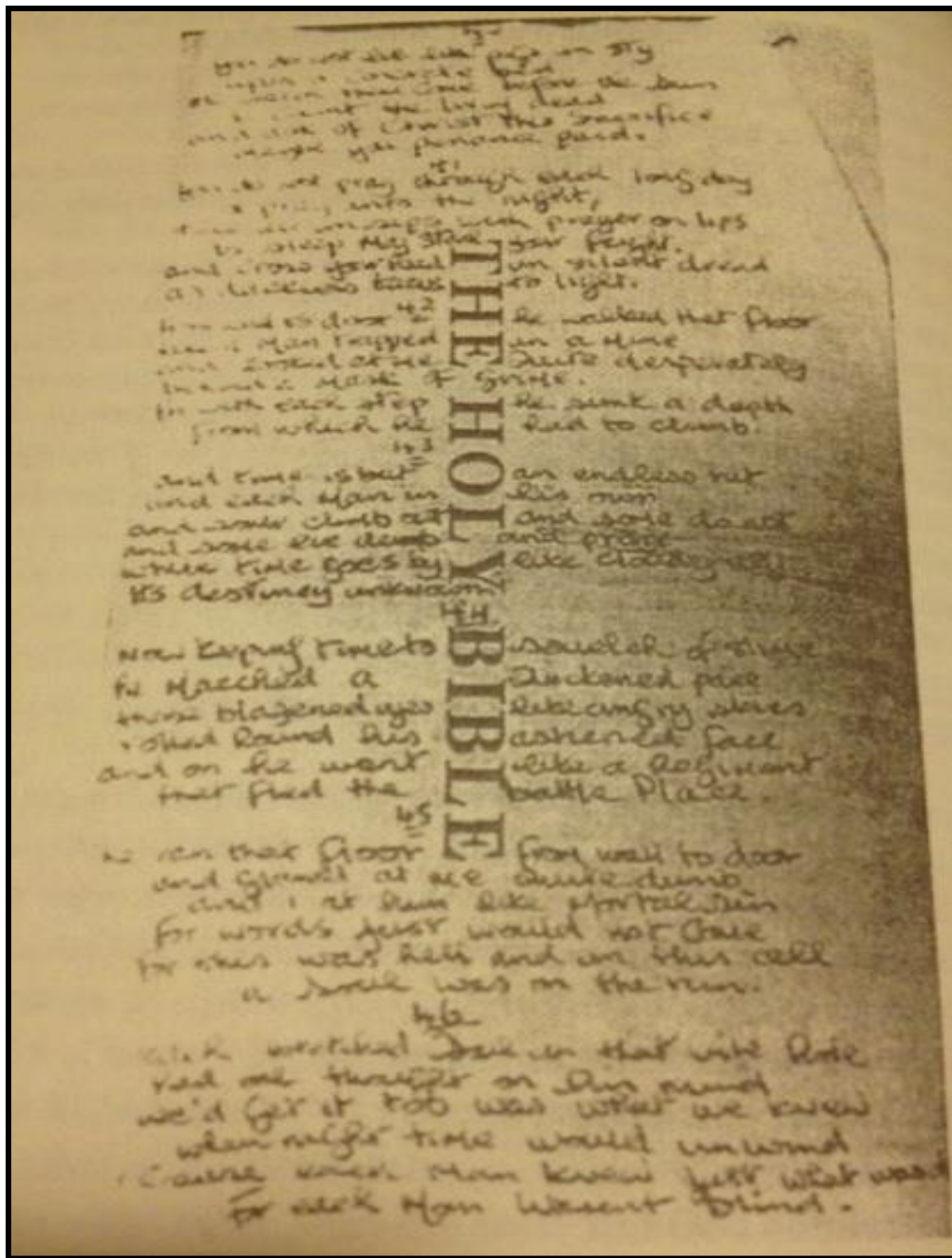


Figure 13: Bobby Sands, *Untitled*.

Letter written by Bobby Sands on a piece of paper taken from the Holy Bible.

Retrieved from: B. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, Mercier Press, Cork, 1997, p. 82.

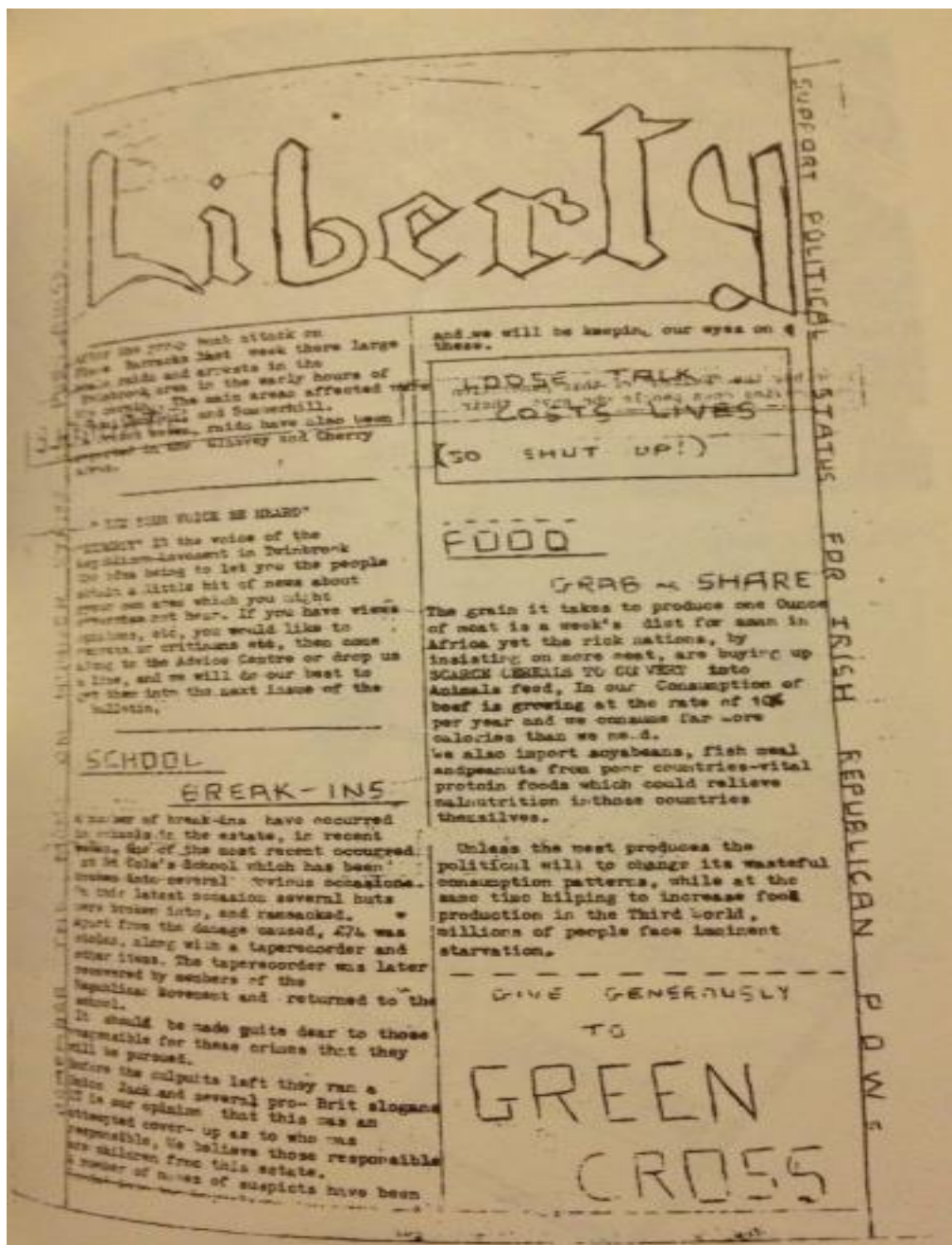


Figure 15: A surviving and rare issue of the newspaper "Liberty", which was founded by Bobby Sands in the summer of 1976 in Twinbrook.

Retrieved from: D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation*, Nation Books, 2006, pp. 209-211.

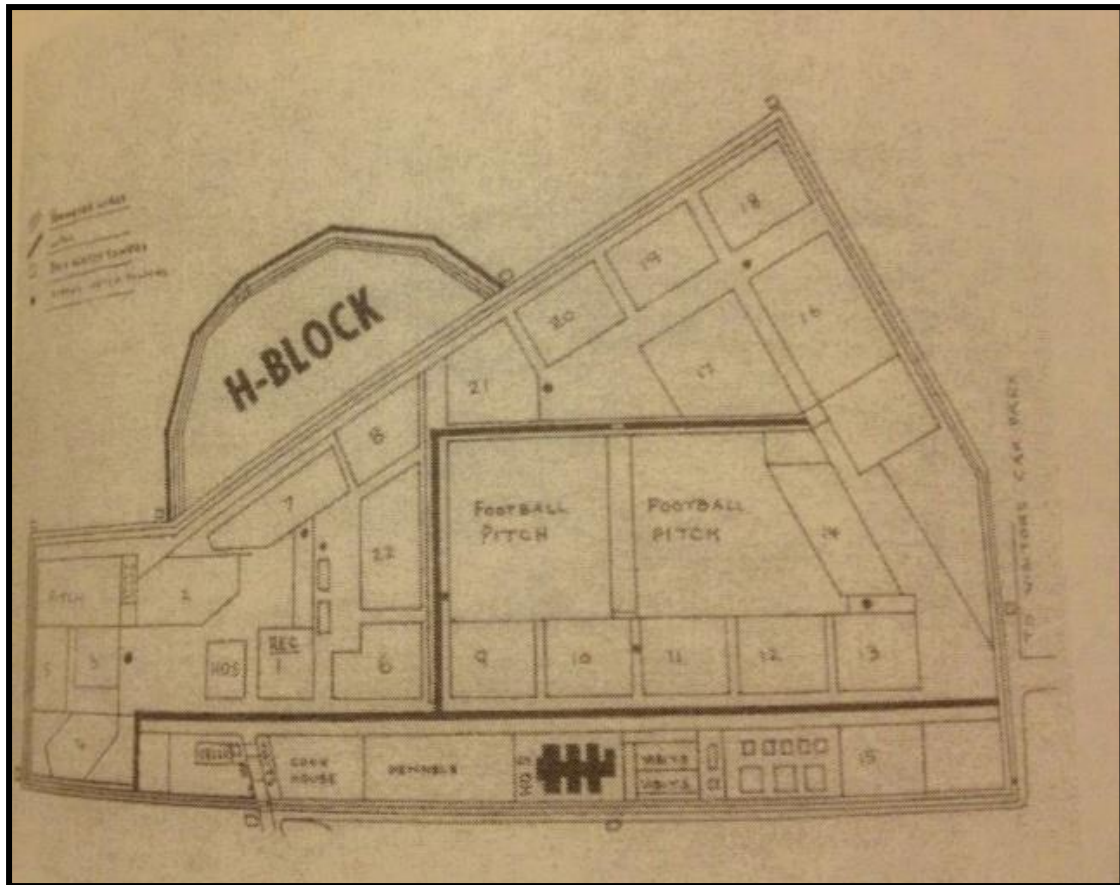


Figure 16: Map of the prison blocks in Long Kesh, drawn for the memoirs of Gerry Adams (cage 11).

Retrieved from: D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation*, Nation Books, 2006, pp. 209-211.

(A reprinted image in O'Hearn taken from Gerry Adams, *Cage Eleven*, Dingle, Brandon Book Publishers, 1980).

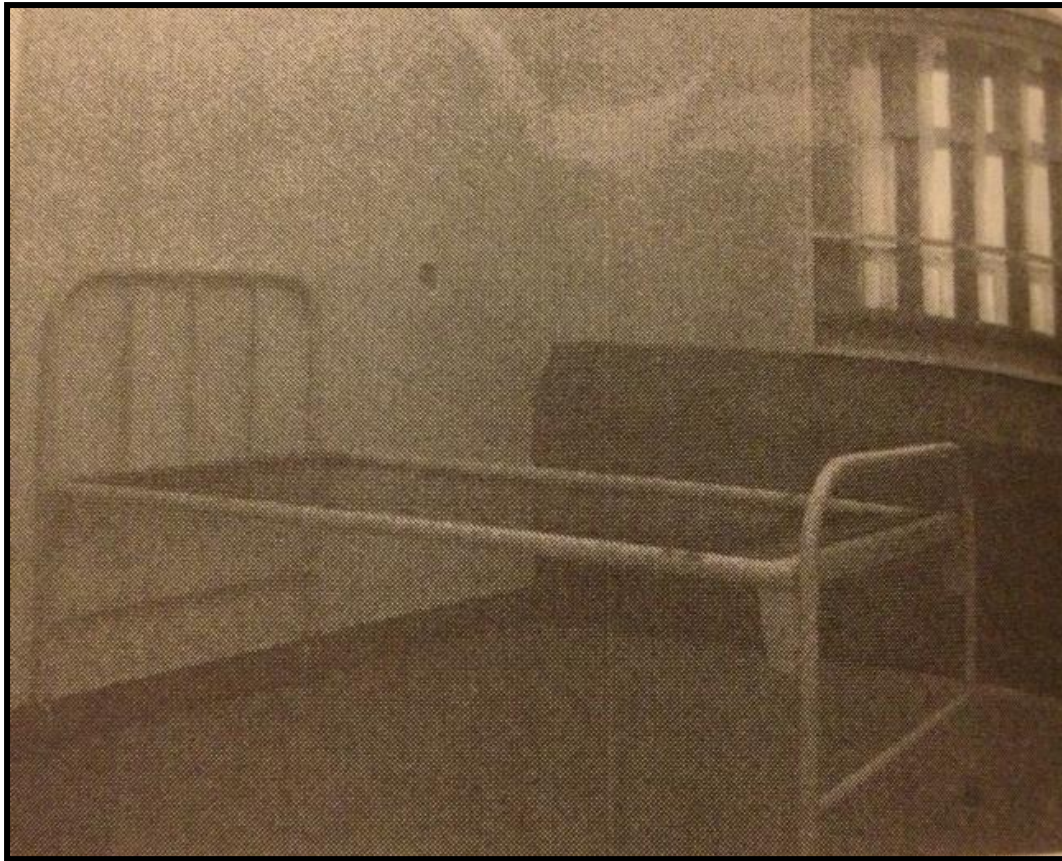


Figure 17: Bobby Sands' bed in the hospital room where he died.

The photo was taken after Long Kesh was closed as a prison in 2005.

Retrieved from: D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation*, Nation Books, 2006, pp. 209-211.



Figure 18: Pictures of the hunger strikers containing the dates of their death or withdrawal from the strike. Bobby Sands is the first on the top left.

Retrieved from: D. O'Hearn, *Nothing but an Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation*, Nation Books, 2006, pp. 209-211.