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## Trauma among Palestinian Women: Coping with *Shuhada'* in Their Struggle for Resistance in Kanafani's Work

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examines the impact of trauma on Palestinian women following the Nakba disaster, employing Kanafani's literary work Umm Saad to clarify the many psychological, social, and cultural challenges faced by Palestinian female refugees. The study illustrates how the protagonist's tenacity in the arduous setting of a refugee camp exhibits remarkable endurance in the face of adversity, displacement, and degradation of dignity. Employing Alexander's cultural trauma theory, this analysis of the character Umm Saad explores Palestinian mothers' responses to martyrdom shuhada', emphasising the interplay of religious, cultural, and social imperatives that impose unique constraints on maternal mourning, while simultaneously reinforcing their role as symbols of national resilience. Kanafani's oeuvre functions as both a literary homage to and a critique of the enduring cultural pain of the Nakba, illustrating Palestinian women's narratives as manifestations of political resistance that underscore the importance of motherhood in Palestinian identity. The findings highlight the importance of recognising these Palestinian women's resilience and reinterpreting cultural and political myths of sacrifice, emphasising the significant maternal strength amid systemic oppression and exile.*

**Keywords:** Culture trauma, Kanafani, Nakba, resistance literature, *Shuhada'*.

As per the Al Jazeera report on October 31, 2023, the Israeli government offensive has caused severe and destructive consequences. Over 8,500 Palestinians, predominantly women and children, have lost their lives. The Israeli military has issued multiple warnings to residents in northern Gaza and Gaza City, leading to a rise in population in towns and cities located in the central and southern regions of the enclave. Nevertheless, despite these admonitions, aerial attacks have continued unabated in the southern Gaza Strip (Al Jazeera 2023). In the midst of this grave situation, Palestinian women are experiencing the most extreme living conditions. Starting with the Nakba in 1948, the catastrophe has continued without interruption, evolving into an ongoing and horrifying event for Palestinians (Gokaru et al. 2023). When examining trauma among Palestinian women, scholars generally concur that during the Israeli assault on Palestine, Palestinian women have encountered two distinct forms of trauma: the conflicting political viewpoints of subdued women by Israeli government, which centre on the exercise of intellectual

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superiority and the tactic of maintaining silence. The local Palestinian authorities employed religious interpretations, patriarchal/traditional norms, and political ideology to distort or impede the coping mechanisms of mothers who suffered the loss of a child in martyrdom (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003). The global power brokers employed the concept of hegemony, as explained by Nandy (1998): The Israeli political adversaries capitalised on their political and military strength, citing "national security" and "survival imperatives," to sustain the subjugation of Palestinian women. This is accomplished by utilising dominant Western scientific frameworks, such as psychological concepts related to parenting and motherhood, together with traumatological theories on coping with sorrow. The utilisation of these frameworks sought to portray Palestinian women as inadequate carers and unorthodox mourners.

In the analysis of trauma among Palestinian women, researchers identify two primary layers of oppression. The Israeli occupation enforces systemic violence, suppressing Palestinian women through political control and intellectual hegemony. Conversely, local Palestinian authorities uphold patriarchal and political ideologies that govern women's coping strategies, especially regarding mourning and motherhood (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003). Furthermore, global power structures, as articulated by Nandy (1998), facilitate this subjugation through the use of Western psychological frameworks that portray Palestinian women as deficient carers and mourners. The portrayal of Palestinian motherhood within dominant narratives of trauma and grief serves to further marginalise women's agency in opposing occupation.

Palestinian resistance narratives in literature serve as a significant medium for women to express their struggles, resilience, and defiance against colonial oppression and patriarchal constraints. The connection between national history and women's lived experiences is crucial for comprehending Palestinian resistance (Abdo & Lentin 2003). Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003) observes that Palestinian women frequently transform grief into a source of strength, employing it as a means of resistance. This strategy challenges prevailing representations of Palestinian women and emphasises their capacity to develop new forms of resilience through cultural and religious frameworks. Extracting hope from grief appears paradoxical; however, the intensity of suffering can enhance one's capacity for resilience.

This paper analyses the role of Palestinian women in resistance literature, specifically focussing on Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Umm Saad*. This study examines the navigation of trauma, resilience, and national identity among Palestinian women within the framework of Jeffrey C. Alexander's (2004) cultural trauma theory, particularly in the context of resistance. The research seeks to address the question: How does Kanafani's depiction of *Umm Saad* exemplify the intersection of Palestinian women coping with *Shuhada'* in their resistance in Palestinian literature?

Ghassan Kanafani is widely acknowledged as a pioneering figure in literature and the originator of the term "Palestinian/Arab resistance literature." Kanafani's 1966 study is a pioneering attempt to conceptualise the link between literature and resistance in the Palestinian context, providing a systematic framework for comprehending this correlation. This ideology is characterised by three main features. Firstly, it upholds the belief in the unity of Palestinians, regardless of their geographical location. Secondly, it combines pan-Arab and specifically Palestinian nationalism. Lastly, it places a strong emphasis on the writer's responsibility to address communal and national matters, rather than focusing on personal and introspective issues (Khoury 2013). The resistance literature of Kanafani and other Palestinian writers serves as a concise embodiment of the shared awareness and beliefs of the Palestinian population. It serves as a method of communication and emotional release for individuals. Literature of resistance represents an academic endeavour focused on fulfilling one's national obligations and demonstrating patriotism. Palestinian resistance literature both as a means of literary expression and a tool for the nonviolent struggle undertaken by the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people alone possess the jurisdiction to determine the most effective approach to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with international legal frameworks. Literary resistance refers to a specific form of resistance deliberately adopted by the Palestinian people during a particular period and in certain circumstances. It is merely one of various forms of resistance that they have at their disposal. The Palestinian people have the rightful authority to choose any

method of resistance against the oppressive actions carried out by the occupiers of their homeland, as depicted in Kanafani's stories.

Furthermore, Kanafani's literary works highlight the significant role of Palestinian women as a formidable force of resistance, garnering praise and recognition for their influence. Umm Saad epitomises the female representation within these resistance forces. Umm Saad is portrayed as the main character in Kanafani's novels, but she is also a genuine and resilient Palestinian woman in real life. The novel was published by Dar Al Awda in Beirut in 1969. Kanafani dedicated the book to "Umm Saad, the People and the School" and acknowledged her influence in the introduction. He stated that Umm Saad taught him a great deal and that the content of the book was inspired by her words and experiences. Despite the challenges faced by Palestinians, Umm Saad's Palestinian identity and resilience remained intact. Kanafani also mentioned her unwavering hope for armed resistance over the course of two decades (Kanafani 2023).

The literary work *Umm Saad* has been selected for this paper as research data. *Umm Saad* is situated in the backdrop of the "June 5th War" and the subsequent acts of resistance. The story revolves around the experiences of a Palestinian woman living in a Lebanese refugee camp, with a specific focus on nine separate but interconnected chapters. In the opening chapter of the book, the story reveals that Umm Saad's oldest son, Saad, is captured when he is travelling to join the guerilla forces. The character Mukhtar presented a proposition to Saad and his colleagues, offering to release them from imprisonment on the condition that they surrender. Nevertheless, Saad and his party rejected the offer and proceeded to ridicule Mukhtar. Umm Saad shown neither worry nor annoyance towards her son's behaviour, but instead felt a sense of relief. Within the literary piece, Umm Saad encourages her oldest son to join the armed forces and, at times, to willingly sacrifice his life in support of the Palestinian national movement. According to Palestinian cultural norms and the concept of "martyrdom," mothers are expected to keep their feelings of loss for their children under wraps. Reason being, these offsprings' deaths were deemed "honourable," "deserving," and definitely "sacred" (Khamis 2020). Kanafani's tales portray a mom who experiences a feeling of satisfaction when her children take on the role of warriors or even martyrs. Nevertheless, it is crucial for this study to analyse the gendered tactics utilised to deal with trauma and the way in which oppression intertwines the "politics of loss" with the "politics of resistance."

### Methodology

This study examines Ghassan Kanafani's novel "Umm Saad" utilising character-space and character-system analysis (Woloch 2009) to investigate How does Kanafani's portrayal of Umm Saad illustrate the intersection of Palestinian women's experiences with Shuhada' in their resistance within Palestinian literature? This research analyses the role, interactions, and experiences of key characters, applying Jeffrey C. Alexander's (2004) culture trauma theory to evaluate Umm Saad's psychological distress and its connection to the trauma experienced by Palestinian women regarding their sons' sacrifices for resistance. The analysis of dialogue and narrative techniques reveals how Kanafani depicts trauma and resistance. This approach offers an understanding of literature as a vehicle for articulating the cultural trauma experienced by Palestinian women.

### Trauma among Palestinian Women After Nakba

Utilising Kanafani's literary piece *Umm Saad* as a foundation, the paper focuses on the protagonist Umm Saad to uncover the experiences and psychological distress endured by Palestinian women in the aftermath of the Nakba catastrophe. According to Caruth (1991), trauma is defined by the occurrence of recurring hallucinations, nightmares, thoughts, or actions. Psychologically, trauma is characterised by delayed onset, repeated patterns, and a latent phase. When a traumatic incident occurs, its harmful effects exceed the victim's ability to perceive and understand. The victim's understanding of the fundamental nature of the trauma is unavoidably restricted at the time of the incident. The emergence of trauma can be delayed due to its intrinsic complexity and difficulties in comprehending and absorbing the underlying experiences. The form demonstrates

a pattern of repetition and replication. After a traumatic episode, people frequently undergo a prolonged period of repression and regression. The condition in question is usually referred to as the latency period of trauma. Kaplan (2005) states that individuals display diverse reactions to their experiences. Trauma is often portrayed in literary works through a variety of severe emotional states, serving as a reoccurring thematic element. The author exhibits ingenuity in narrative techniques, such as employing temporal discontinuities, vivid descriptions of landscapes, deliberate omissions in the storytelling, moments of stillness, and the use of split timing or non-linear narratives. These approaches are employed to emphasise the themes of disorder, detachment, and contemplation of thoughts, which are depicted as a reaction to the experience of trauma.

According to the narrative in Kanafani's novel: the main character Umm Saad, lives in a refugee camp in Lebanon, has been facing the difficulties of camp life since leaving her home country. She has endured an extended period of hardship that beyond the boundaries of human endurance. The protagonist lives in a refugee camp that is marked by unfavourable environmental conditions, absence of well-planned infrastructure, and insufficient drainage systems. The refugee camp is prone to flooding after rainfall, leading to the complete submersion of the entire camp. In addition, the pathways within the camp become inaccessible owing to the buildup of mud and debris, requiring the male residents in the camp to clean the impacted areas. Umm Saad was used to witnessing the regular flooding of the refugee camp due to rain, which caused red mud streaks to appear on the bottom of her skirt. Nevertheless, her ability to withstand such conditions was ultimately limited. Umm Saad conveyed her longing for Allah to terminate her unchanging and repetitive life, which endured for a span of twenty years as she found herself confined in mud and stagnant water each night (Kanafani 1992:13). Within the confines of a compacted and overcrowded camp setting, the reconceptualized notion of home frequently prompted women to primarily focus on domestic and familial affairs. Nevertheless, this circumstance unintentionally subjected them to the examination and surveillance of their relatives and neighbours. The displacement effect not only violated their privacy but also caused them significant distress and undermined their sense of honour.

Furthermore, according to Massey (1994), women actively participated in the geographical aspects of family separations and the transformation of living arrangements. They showcased their ingenuity by converting the temporary state enforced by recurrent evictions into a feeling of lastingness linked to the notion of "home". The concept of home was not simply a replication of a stable identity or a sentimental place, but rather an area defined by ever-changing emotional, social, and relational connections. This principle can also be supported by the example of "Umm Saad", who continually strives to improve the standard of living for her family by actively seeking job to provide financial assistance. Within the context of the collective trauma experienced by the Palestinian refugee community, women face greater anguish and strain compared to adult men. Nevertheless, Kanafani's portrayal of Umm Saad sheds light on the living conditions experienced by Palestinian women in their refugee state. They exerted genuine attempts within their own abilities to create a household marked by vibrant emotions and social bonds.

Nevertheless, the personal account of Umm Saad exemplifies the ongoing and impressive re-evaluation of caregiving within a context marked by involuntary displacement, instability, and aggression. The revised role of nurturing that she represents is crucial in promoting a sense of normality, which helps to preserve the fundamental nature of existence despite the difficulties of being displaced and confined to limited space. This job serves as an example demonstration of subjectification processes that occur within both personal and societal worlds, bridging the gap between the everyday and the spectacular throughout the course of one's life. The recollections and narratives of Palestinian women, which are rooted in their physical experiences and senses, challenge two specific frameworks: the "liberal frames" that mainly attribute their ability to act to resistance against patriarchal authority or colonial oppression, and the nationalist "frames" (Salih 2017). Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003) asserts that enabling people to communicate verbally is the first step in promoting positive reinforcement. The traumas suffered by these individuals are not solely caused by the loss of their children, but also arise from the political and social oppression

they face. Palestinian mothers possess inherent reserves of resilience, even in the face of substantial difficulties and hardships.

The female characters depicted as mothers in Kanafani's novels endure the psychological distress resulting from the loss of their homes and displacement during the war. Additionally, they are profoundly influenced by the societal context following their children's enlistment as soldiers, which restricts their ability to openly express their anxieties for their sons, and in some cases, leads to the tragic loss of their children. Despite enduring challenging circumstances in refugee camps and experiencing dual trauma, Palestinian women demonstrated remarkable resilience and optimism, persistently advocating for the Palestinian cause via their individual efforts. It has been observed that the tales of women indicate that the response of Palestinian mothers who have lost a child in the context of martyrdom is comparable to that of other mothers who have experienced the loss of a child in traumatic circumstances. Moreover, Palestinian mothers saw their role primarily as guardians of their children and families, prioritising their safety and well-being rather than endorsing or fostering behaviours that are impulsive or involve taking risks. The Palestinian mothers of martyrs have heightened pain due to the intersection of political and gender-based oppression, which exacerbates the challenges they face in dealing with their bereavement (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003).

### **Support *Shuhada'* or Remain Maternal Instinct**

The term *shahid* (plural, *shuhada'*), meaning both witness and martyr in Arabic, originates from the Syriac *sahido*, which was used to convey key Christian concepts of martyrdom in the Syriac Bible (Jeffery 2006:223). The Arabic term for martyr derives from the same root as *shuhada'*, which means to witness or testify. Muslims publicly affirm their faith through *shuhada'*, declaring the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (Davis 2015). In the Arabic version of the Quran, "*shahid*" or "*shuhada'*" denotes "martyr" or "martyrdom," indicating the act of striving to protect one's faith or being "killed in the path of God." The Quranic verse 3:140 articulates :

If you have suffered injuries (at Uḥud), they suffered similarly (at Badr). We alternate these days (of victory and defeat) among people so that Allah may reveal the (true) believers, choose martyrs from among you—and Allah does not like the wrongdoers— (al-Quran, Ali 'Imran 3:14)

Significant retreat experienced by the early Muslim community, according to conventional Muslim chronology (Cook 2007). Quran 4:69 states:

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be in the company of those blessed by Allah: the prophets, the people of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous—what honourable company! (al-Quran, An-Nisa 4:69)

Additional passages of the Quran al-Hadid, 57:19 also indicate this:

(As for) those who believe in Allah and His messengers, it is they who are (truly) the people of truth. And the martyrs, with their Lord, will have their reward and their light. But (as for) those who disbelieve and reject Our signs, it is they who will be the residents of the Hellfire.

Other verses of the Quran reference *shahid* or *shuhada'*, denoting the benefits for those killed in the path of God; specifically, verses 3:169, 3:158, 2:154, and 22:58 address the rewards of martyrdom. The most definitive verses delineating the martyr's reward are found in the Quran:

Should you be martyred or die in the cause of Allah, then His forgiveness and mercy are far better than whatever (wealth) those 'who stay behind' accumulate. (al-Quran, Ali 'Imran 3:157)

So their Lord responded to them: "I will never deny any of you—male or female—the reward of your deeds. Both are equal in reward. Those who migrated or were expelled from their



homes, and were persecuted for My sake and fought and 'some' were martyred—I will certainly forgive their sins and admit them into Gardens under which rivers flow, as a reward from Allah. And with Allah is the finest reward! (al-Quran, Ali' Imran 3:195)

The issue of *shuhada'* (martyrdom) has generated significant discussion and produced a range of conclusions, some of which may be contradictory. The Encyclopaedia of Politics and Religion defines martyrdom as a voluntary, conscious, and selfless readiness to suffer and sacrifice one's life for a cause. The Christian martyr confronts unavoidable death. Islamic tradition emphasises the valour of a soldier who dies in a holy war, or jihad, aiming to defeat an adversary without the requirement of sacrificing his own life. Jewish tradition honours both those who maintain their faith amid adversity and the victims, such as Holocaust survivors, who were stripped of agency (Wuthnow 2013).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian offers an alternative interpretation of *shuhada'*, arguing that the concept of Martyrdom—*shuhada'*—includes a wider significance of national victimisation and religious sacrifice during a period of national struggle, particularly the Intifada. Martyrdom may serve as a form of resistance by individuals striving to endure and navigate their existence while opposing the Israeli occupation in Palestine. This survival process results in the individual's death. A martyr, or Shahid in religious terminology, serves as a testament to one's faith, including individuals who bear witness to their own death (martyrdom). In political discourse, a Shahid refers to an individual who dies in the quest for freedom and is honoured as a hero (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003).

Palestinian mothers perceive *shuhada'* as a religious deed, as a commendable duty for their sons in the defence of their homeland. Scholars investigating the connection between Palestinian mothers and *shuhada'* have examined the agony experienced by these mothers when their children become *shuhada'*, consistently highlighting their efforts to derive strength from the anguish of their loss. They must not only face the anguish of losing their children but also assume the role of resistance. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2003) highlighted a bias in the representation of Arab/Palestinian women in Western media, which stigmatises them as instigators of conflict and revels in promoting martyrdom among their children. Israeli and Western (mostly American) media frequently employ "psychological" bereavement standards to analyse the responses of Palestinian mothers, depicting them as "inept" carers. This subjective perception results in Palestinian women being seen as prisoners of their ethnicity (Arab) or faith (Islam). Occasionally, within the Palestinian social framework, some notion of *shuhada'* necessitates that women repress their sorrow when their children are slain, as such fatalities are regarded as "noble," "worthy," or even "sacred." Consequently, women frequently lack the right to publicly express sorrow and are instead compelled to "cheer" and celebrate, often doing so when in states of shock, hysteria, or total breakdown (Khamis 2020).

The social and religious prestige linked to being a martyr's mother significantly affects women's ability to mourn the loss of their sons. The individuals experience a conflict between the obligation to adapt to their new roles and the distress stemming from the loss of their sons (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003). Thus, women's narratives serve as a form of political resistance. This action allows for the replacement of the masculine narrative of sacrifice with a feminine narrative of motherhood. Palestinians employ diverse strategies to withstand and address ongoing political oppression and personal suffering. Palestinian women engage in resistance against the occupation through social and political avenues, merging their gender roles with national duties and reinterpreting them as a new strategy for coping. Literary novels effectively demonstrate mothers' significant ability to endure and their personal strength in utilising resources derived from traumatic experiences throughout the healing process. Women primarily manage loss by linking grief with hope. The cultural trauma stemming from the Nakba is a significant factor motivating Palestinian mothers and women's groups to draw upon resilience to withstand suffering and foster optimism through religious and cultural frameworks. Despite seeming paradoxical, the deep suffering linked to loss serves to enhance the inherent resilience of Palestinian women.

### The Resistance of Palestinian Women In "*Umm Saad*"

An additional study conducted among Palestinian participants revealed that moms who have experienced the effects of war tend to exhibit more favourable behaviours towards their children. According to Taylor and other scholars (2000:411), after what happened during Nakba, there exists a hypothesis suggesting that males tend to exhibit a higher propensity for engaging in aggressive or evasive behaviours, whereas females are more inclined towards nurturing and forming social connections as coping mechanisms in reaction to stressful situations. This phenomenon can be further substantiated by cultural norms that ascribe significant importance to the role of motherhood among women. In substantiation of this claim, it is noteworthy to mention that certain Palestinian women clearly articulate their responsibility as caretakers for their fellow group members during times of conflict (Palonen 2012). In the second chapter of the novel *Umm Saad*, Saad effectively became a member of the guerilla forces. Umm Saad exhibited a high level of enthusiasm and pride, expressing a desire to go to the guerrillas' camp in order to provide them with care and support. In the fifth Chapter of the novel, Umm Saad expresses her adherence to the notion that resistance manifests itself in various ways, asserting that every Palestinian possesses the entitlement and responsibility to engage in it. She specifically urges women and children residing in refugee camps to undertake resistance endeavours commensurate with their ability (Kanafani 1992). The primary political activity of Umm Saad and other women arises from the drive to transform the mundane within conditions of poverty, brutality, and existential crisis. Political events have a significant impact on domestic and everyday life, as they intersect, intertwine, and have meaning. However, it is within the arena of ordinary life that women's political subjectivity becomes prominent. The concept of the ordinary is not inherently opposed to, but rather serves as the primary focal point of the eventful. The phenomenon being described is the confiscation of everyday life, a condition that encompasses both personal and societal deprivation, surpassing even the displacement from one's homeland in terms of significance.

The literary work extensively explores the portrayal of Umm Saad's appearance and her narrator's emotional state on numerous occasions. As the embodiment of the authoritative narrator, her bodily expressions, including gestures, motions, tone, and humour, as well as her fatigued yet bright eyes, communicate a complex interplay of fragility and resilience, exhaustion and fortitude, the physical demands of child-rearing and the elevated social standing resulting from successfully raising her offspring. The personal narrative of Umm Saad is characterised by its distinctiveness, yet her physical appearance, attire, and body language allude to a shared encounter with displacement. These elements serve to convey the communal plight experienced by women who were originally peasants but were subsequently transformed into dispossessed refugees in 1948 and on multiple occasions thereafter. Inside the context of the displacement and tumultuous upheaval of traditional gender norms resulting from the loss of physical and social boundaries, Umm Saad expands her caregiving responsibilities beyond the confines of her household and personal sphere. She adapts and restructures familial connections inside the confined and condensed environment of the camp. Caring and nurturing roles can extend beyond the confines of the immediate family, encompassing a broader network of care and support involving neighbours, acquaintances, or siblings. These dynamic fosters a communal camp-family mentality. Throughout history, women who do not have familial ties have consistently provided assistance and solidarity to one another in various domestic tasks such as cooking, childcare, and eldercare, among other critical livelihood activities. This phenomenon can be likened to the concept of fictive kinship, where women assume roles analogous to sisters, mothers, aunts, and daughters (Allan 2013: 328).

Similar to Neimneh's (2021) conclusion regarding the nature of Umm Saad, Kanafani's Umm Saad has been analysed for its protest message against displacement and its affirmation of the significance of land for the colonised, embodied in the archetypal mother figure. He determined that the representation of woman as a symbol of the Palestinian land/nation in Palestinian literature is not entirely novel. However, this article scrutinises the gendered and politically

significant motif of woman as the homeland through the universally profound symbolism of the mother archetype, illustrating how the theme of land is deeply embedded in the consciousness of Palestinian writers. In summary, in response to the aforementioned techniques utilised by women to silence their voices, Palestinian moms have devised an innovative strategy to confront their conditions. This strategy is defined by a commitment to protect loved ones, pursue survival strategies, oppose injustice, and cultivate hope. The coping rhetoric utilised by Palestinian women is marked by themes of love and peace, aimed at addressing feelings of frustration, hatred, and powerlessness. Kanafani's accomplishment is in reconciling the dual aspects of the mother archetype—the personal mother and the symbolic earth mother—to further the political objective of Palestinian resistance.

To conclude, *Umm Saad* explores pain while addressing national resistance, survival methods, opposition to injustice, and the cultivation of hope. The repercussions of weeping and mourning for Nakba complicate the depictions of loss and constitute a challenge to memory, language, and the traumatic experience as a kind of literary expression. Documenting the suffering of Palestinian women is, in a manner, cathartic and soothing. Applying Alexander's theories on cultural trauma can enhance the comprehension of this resistance literature as a testament to and interpretation of the Nakba as an event that remains unassimilated because to its brevity and profound impact. Alexander defines cultural trauma as a phenomenon when members of a group perceive themselves as having endured a traumatic incident that indelibly influences their collective consciousness, permanently altering their memories and fundamentally transforming their future identity in irrevocable ways (Alexander 2004). Alexander's theory provides novel insights into the comprehension of Kanafani's literature. Empowering each woman, even through literary works, to narrate her own account of the war constitutes a political act of self-actualization. This action enabled us to substitute the masculinised narratives of sacrifice with a feminised mother narrative. The mothers emphasised their critique of the restrictions imposed on their expression of grief and sorrow in response to Palestinian society's reaction to the death of their children. The suppression of voice, tears, and emotions led to the emergence of a novel coping mechanism that heightened the imperative to vigorously safeguard the surviving family members or engage in public political actions that honour the *shuhada'*.

There are major social implications of the conclusions drawn from Kanafani's literary works. There should be no portrayal of Palestinian martyr mothers as "rocks." The maternal feelings these mothers have for their children are undiminished, even though they lose a child to political cause and resistance movement. It is not indicative of preference or wish that their "willingness" to accept the tremendous destiny of their offspring is high. It is possible that every Palestinian mother has given up the honorific *shuhada'* in exchange for the life of her child. In reality, it is not a choice; it is their duty to the people and their unwavering endeavour to restore their homeland. The baseless accusations against them drive their children to seek martyrdom, intensifying their suffering and hindering their recovery. The previous chapter addressing *shuhada'* mentioned in the Holy Quran does not indicate that mothers are forbidden from mourning or weeping for the deaths of their sons, even if those sons have attained the status of *shuhada'*. Despite the considerable traumas and obstacles encountered by Palestinian mothers, they possess inherent reserves of strength that merit cultivation and support. Empowering their muted voices commences the journey towards such encouragement. In contrast, Palestinian women transform their adversities into a creative method to confront their situations. The coping rhetoric utilised by Palestinian women is marked by themes of love and peace, aimed at addressing feelings of frustration, hatred, and powerlessness. Kanafani's accomplishment is in synthesising the diverse dimensions of the mother archetype—the individual mother and the symbolic earth mother—to further the political objective of Palestinian resistance.

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