

## *Palestinian Culture of Identity*

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### **Abstract**

#### **Write down: I am an Arab!**

This powerful proclamation is an extract from a poem composed by the eminent and late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. His instructive and proud words were the initial spark that challenged to respond to the question of the suppressed identity of Palestinian Arabs in Israel. This study will attempt to explore the cultural representation of identity for generations of Palestinian young men and women who were born and lived in Israel but remain culturally repressed and silenced by the hegemonic forces.

Identity has been a controversial issue in the mind of every Palestinian ever since the 1948 “Al-Nakbah.” This study will attempt to comprehend and analyze the multiple ways in which different generations of 1948 Palestinians identified themselves within their societies.

While studying the Arabs of Israel one notices that their cultural and intellectual productions (poetry and literature) reflect aspects of the conflicts they endured. Confusion and contradictory feelings permeate their psyches as they attended Israeli schools and spoke Hebrew as their official language.

This paper will explore the literary heritage of two generations of 1948 Palestinians: The writings of Palestinians of 1948 who were born before Al-Nakbah (living within the borders of Israel today). Those include poems, plays and novels. It will also explore the writings of the younger generation of 1948 Palestinians (born and raised after the Al-Nakbah and considered to be the new generation of Israeli Arabs).

A critical analysis will identify how these two generations of Palestinian writers dealt with the contradictions of living inside Israeli society that did not acknowledge them as the indigenous inhabitants of the land. Their translation of their sense of belonging within their literary works will be evident and how they dealt with the conflict of being simultaneously Israeli Arab as well as Palestinian.

How can cultural production reconcile the homeland carried in the memory nostalgically and the real society they lived in within the Israeli borders?

Keywords: Culture and intellectual production can be the homeland of an intellectual.

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## **Introduction:**

When home as place (geographically) is lost in a glimpse and occupied by strangers, home is carried in the heart and mind and expressed in cultural productions: art, literature (novels, plays, poetry), songs, and most of all get-togethers with other dispossessed Palestinians (who become 'home for you') (Al-Barghouthi, 2004).

Henry Tajfel's social identity theory (1979) proposed that the group one belongs to give one a sense of self-esteem; on the other hand, a group can also enhance its self-image by holding prejudiced views against other groups, and this leads to dividing the world into "them" and "us" and fomenting prejudice and discrimination (McLeod, 2007).

Boundaries are created in the society by differentiating communities from others in symbolic ways, which, as conceptual categorizations, represent feelings towards environments, people, objects and practices, times and spaces (Lamont & Molnar, 2002, pp. 167-195).

Since the individual "self" is part of the "collective self" boundaries between the "we" as higher rank or better off and "them" as lower rank and 'less than' create inequality, fear and insecurity. An individual's concept of security is intricately tied to the concept of identity and collective identity. The feelings of insecurity are nurtured by these divisions (Cho, 2012, pp. 299-316).

Schwarz defines identity as something that produces meanings or is known as cultural representation. He believes that a nation is a symbolic community and it is that which accounts for "power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance" (Stuart Hall, 1996).

Mekkawi identifies the Palestinian Arab community as a colonized national minority that after the Al-Nakbah<sup>1</sup> 1948 was:

Emotionally wounded, socially rural, politically lost, poverty-stricken and nationally hurt. They suddenly became a minority ruled by a powerful, sophisticated majority against whom they fought to retain their country and land. It was an ongoing experience, for every family, which remained, had immediate relatives on the other side of the border. Arabs in Israel<sup>2</sup> were left without political leadership nor an educated elite (Mekkawi, 2008. pp. 23-24).

Azmi Bishara believes that Palestinian identity is not about being a minority, nor immigrants; Israel was enforced on them, citizenship for them is their license to stay on their land, so they are loyal to the law but not to the values of the state (Gust, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> The "Nakbah" is the Arabic word for catastrophe which Palestinians use to delineate the occupation of their homeland in 1948 and the expulsion of a quarter of a million indigenous Palestinians from Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> Those Palestinians who managed to stay within the 1948 borders while their sisters and brothers were driven out under duress through many massacres committed against the defenseless Palestinians.

Also Majid Al-Haj, a professor of sociology at Haifa University explains: They belong to a double “periphery. Located at the margins of both Israeli society and the Palestinian national movement” they often combine a strong Palestinian identity with an equally powerful desire for full and equal recognition as Israeli citizens (Identity Crises, Israel and its Arab Citizens, 2004).

Post Al-Nakbah, Palestinian Arabs living in what came to be known as the state of Israel, went through certain stages as they attempted to express their national identity: *Isolationism*; *Radical Palestinianization*; *Openness to other Palestinians* living in Gaza and the West Bank (post 1967); *Active Participation in the Political Resistance* acts in support of the intifada in 1987; the second wave of the Al Aqsa Intifada crystallized the feeling of Palestinian national identity. Finally, the *Launching of the Peace Process* talks in 1990.(Koprulu & Koldas, 2010, pp. 43-73).

Ghassan Kanafani’s study of Palestinian resistance literature under occupation covers the period between 1948-1968, and points to a lack of forcefulness in the expression of national identity evidenced by the writers’ emphasis on the themes of love and social problems rather than political identity. Mahmoud Darwish and Samih Al-Qassem both started with humble and weak poems and novels, but in time they modified their style to accommodate and express political aspirations, as is evident in Palestinian resistance literature. He points to how the Israelis intentionally sought to weaken the study of the Arabic language which led to the increased use of slang Arabic rather than formal Arabic, a step that would contribute to erasing the Palestinian Arab identity. Moreover, Kanafani discusses the imprisonment and torture of Palestinian poets and intellectuals including Samih Al-Qassem, Mahmud Darwish and Hanna Abu Hanna who most of the time were put also under house arrest. A major paradigm shift ensued in the sixties where poetry was used to expose social issues and values like dignity and pride. The concept of the land evolved from woman to mother, and from mother to mother earth and the homeland (Kanafani, 2012, pp. 47-63).

Juhaynah Omar Khatib’s study about the development of Palestinian literature agrees with Kanafani on the humble beginnings of the Palestinian early narratives (prior to Al-Nakbah) and sees that as a symbol of the uprooting of the Arab identity; writers were paralyzed and isolated following the trauma of Al-Nakbah. Radi Shehadeh sees that 1948 Palestine literature was full of references to the identity crisis, the idea of double identity (whether psychological or emotional), anxiety, the military rule, the confiscation of the land and the problems of racism in Israeli society as the authors tried to adapt to those (Khatib, 2012, pp. 41-45).

Since earlier studies explored mainly the works of the older generation of Palestinians, this study focuses on the new cultural productions of the young generation, born and raised after the establishment of Israel, and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How successful were the measures taken by the Israelis to diminish the Arabic identity of Palestine from the perception and feelings of its people?
2. What were the factors that preserved the identity of a people under occupation?

3. What are the cultural tools that the 1948 Palestinians used to express their identity?

### **Political and Social Conditions:**

After Al-Nakbah, and during the establishment of the state of Israel, the *1948 Palestinians* were under military rule or marshal law; there were many restrictions on their movement, their freedom of speech, and any collective cultural activity. Many of the writers were taken imprisoned with no charges except expressing some kind of political or cultural activity (Kanafani, 2012, p. 28).

Allan Pape, a Jewish historian says that the strangers – Jews who came to Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century - did not appreciate the kindness of the Palestinians who were the landlords. The new arrivals considered themselves as the ones who have the right to this land and considered the Palestinians, who were so hospitable to them, as strangers and enemies of the state. This approach of considering the Palestinians as a threat has not changed in the State's institutions since 1948 (Pape, 2012, pp. 12-13).

After the establishment of the State of Israel, lands were confiscated, and Palestinians were kicked out of their houses to other villages as a first step to separate them from their lands. (Pape, p. 39). Hence, it is not surprising that the land was strongly symbolized in their writings to the point where it was and still is considered as sacred. Elaboration in appendix one.

### **Methodology:**

This study will divide the contemporary work of the Palestinians in historical Palestine into two categories: The first (older) generation writings who were born before Al-Nakbah and the second (younger) generation of writers who were born and lived after the creation of the state of Israel.

The first part will analyze the writings of Mahmoud Darwish, Samih Al-Qassem, and Tawfeeq Zayad, all of whom witnessed “Al-Nakbah” and the creation of the state of Israel on their lands. The second part will look at the writings of Naseem Atef Alasadi, Suliaman Dagash, Kamleh Badarneh and Sayed Qashou.

### **Part I: Literature of Pre- “Al-Nakbah” Generation:**

In this part the study will analyze and examine the literature of the first generation who were born before Al-Nakbah, specifically Mahmoud Darwish, Samih Al-Qassem and Tawfeeq Zayad.

#### **I: The Great Poet of the Palestinian Revolution: Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008):**

Darwish was six years old in the year of Al-Nakbah (1948), and he was forced to leave his village along with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. His family fled to Lebanon for two years. At the age of eight Darwish, unable to bear the pains and hardships of being a refugee, walked all the way back to Palestine along with one of

his uncles. He walked while still a child through mountains and valleys (for a whole night) to reach his home in his village AlBerweh, only to find that it had been totally demolished, and an Israeli camp Moshav, a camp for Jewish settlers, had been constructed in its place. *I found myself again a stranger on my land* (Al-Deek, 2003,p. 14). However, Darwish stayed.

In Darwish's school celebration of the Israeli Independence Day, Mahmoud Darwish actually recited his first poem which was entitled: A letter to my Jewish brother. that was his first poem ever which started in the fifties. Later, Darwish became a seasoned poet and he had a very important role to play in the National Palestinian Movement as a prominent poet, thinker and intellectual who had much to do with the development of Palestinian political and literary consciousness. His frequent imprisonments only served to enhance his poetic abilities, as Kanafani claims (Kahloush, 2014). Some of his poems are: Still there is a Path in the Path, On this Land, I am from there, the Poem of the Land, on the Light of a Riffle, Waiting for the Returnees, they Like me Dead, a Cable from the Prison, and Birds don't die in the Galelee.

In 1964, Darwish had the courage to challenge not only the Israelis but the whole world who was engaged in a conspiracy of silence about Palestine, he expressed his identity clearly and ferociously addressing his interrogator:

Write down: I am an Arab!

And my identity card is number fifty thousand, I have eight children and the ninth is coming after a summer. Will you be angry? Write down! I am an Arab, Employed with fellow workers at a quarry, I have eight children, I mine their bread, garments and books from the rocks. I do not supplicate charity at your doors, nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your chamber, so will you be angry? My father... descends from the family of the plow, Not from a privileged class, And my grandfather...was a farmer, Neither well-bred, nor well-born!, Teaches me the pride of the sun, Before teaching me how to read, Write down!, I am an Arab, You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors, And the land which I cultivated, Along with my children, And you left nothing for us, Except for these rocks. So will the State take them As it has been said?! Therefore! Record on the top of the first page: I do not hate people nor do I encroach but if I become hungry, the usurper's flesh will be my food Beware. Beware...Of my hunger, and my anger! (Al-Deek, 2003)

At a later stage, Darwish found it very painful to accept the 1967 defeat and occupation of the West Bank, despite that he implanted hope in his poem On This Land

There's on this land,  
The lady of lands,  
The mother of the beginnings  
And of the ends.  
It was called Palestine  
Its name later became Palestine  
My lady: I deserve,  
Since you're my lady,  
I deserve life

He says addressing the land as if it were his sister: Sister, since 20 years we haven't written poetry, we were fighting (Al-Deek, p. 58).

After he expresses his grief, he emphasizes his attachment to the land:

My homeland is not a suitcase and I am no traveler  
I am the lover, and the land is my love

He denies the Israeli his relation to the land in a sarcastic way when he talks about their attempts to look for ruins to prove their existence in Jerusalem thousands of years ago; he says:

The archeologist is busy analyzing the stones, looking for a sample of legends to prove that I was not, to prove that I was just passing by while planting trees and expressing my love (Al-Deek, p. 59).

Darwish keeps declaring his identity:

I am a prisoner in my country  
Without Land  
With no flag  
With no house  
I am an Arab  
I had a hand that cultivated  
And we know how to build a modern factory and home

The trinity of the land, the home and the mother in Darwish's poems is prolific. His poem: "To my Mother" is one of the most emotionally engaging and nostalgic poems.

I long for my mother's bread, my mother coffee and my mother touch. I love my life because if I die, my mother's tears will shame me.

For the intifada he uses a commanding voice which mobilizes the revolutionaries:

Siege your siege, no other ways out.  
Beat your enemy, no other way out  
If your arm is to fall, pick it up and move.  
If I fall by your side, pick me up and hit your enemy with my body.  
For you now are  
Free, free, and free (Al-Deek, p. 62).

## II: Poet Samih Al-Qassem 1929-:

**Al-Qassem** is one of the most important writers of 1948 Palestinians, from the first generation who lived Al-Nakbah Al-Qassem is a Palestinian Druze whose Arabic poetry is well known throughout the Arab World. His poetry is influenced by two primary periods of his life: Before and after the Six-Day War. He joined the Communist Hadash political party in 1967. Al-Qassem has published several volumes and collections of poetry and expressed his experiences through many poems and plays. He has poems about Jerusalem, Palestine, the homeland and citizenship. Al-Qassem calls himself in one of his poems: 'a god that does not compromise' (Zeidan, 2013, p. 102).

The concept of the land is prominent in his poems as it is in Darwish's poems. He addresses the Israelis using the land metaphorically as the womb that incubated his children saying:

I plow the land with my ancestors' bones to beget my children! I embrace the soil and cuddle its wheat all of my life, my land, my heritage, will never be what you want (Zeidan, p. 121).

About his experience in prison, full of pride he describes himself as the dawn that will never be halted from coming, the poem that no wall will block (Zeidan, p.122).

Al-Qassem translated his pain, anger and determination after the 1967 war in his milestone poem "The enemy of the Sun" saying:

I might lose everything...  
I might work as a garbage collector...  
You might take my last piece of land...  
I will resist you the enemy of the sun...  
I will resist and till the last breath in my veins  
I will resist, and resist and resist ...

In 1987, his anger reaches its peak when the second Intifada begins in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and begins by using the language of incitement and says in his last poem about the Palestinian Intifada:

Advance, advance  
All the sky above you is hell.  
And all the land under you is hell.  
The elder you can kill and the child.  
But will never give in. (Zeidan, p. 107).

Al-Qassem's poem, we might give a chance but we will never forget; on the year 1976 was a very loud scream of justice and righteousness when he said

We never deny, we don't.  
You have arms of all shapes and colors, we never deny  
Arms out of devil imagination we never deny we never  
But who owns the land deed? The history deed and the human deed?  
Who of us owns the deed  
But in the pocket of my coat I guard the deed

After the occupation of the last part of Jerusalem in 1967, Al-Qassem talks about the Holy City and about its occupation as a flagrant invasion of everything sacred.

He calls on the street vendors asking them to buy wooden statues of Jesus Christ in exchange for a handful of flour or bread. (Al-Qassem, 2009)

### **III: Tawfeeq Zayad 1929-1994:**

Born in the Galilee, Zayad studied literature in USSR. After returning home, he was elected mayor of Nazareth on December, 9, 1973, and elected as head of 1948 Palestine Rakah, a communist party, a victory that is said to have "surprised and alarmed" Israelis. His election to the Knesset in the 1973 pressured the Israeli

government to change some of its policies towards Arabs - both those inside Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (The Poet, Tawfeeq Zayad, n.d.)  
Zayad has many several anthologies most famous are: With my teeth, the bridge of return, we are here staying, lets the whole world liste, and my people.

In his poem “We are Staying” a very strong voice of resistance and determination emerges in 1966. He wrote:

Like twenty impossibililites, we are staying...<sup>3</sup>  
On your chests we are staying...  
As a wall in your throats we are staying...  
As a piece of glass in your eyes we are staying...  
As typhoon of fire we are staying...  
In hunger, naked, singing our poems we will stay...  
Filling the streets with anger, filling prisons  
With pride (AlHawari, 2014).

And he wrote:

I call to you all.  
I take your hand and hold it tightly.  
I kiss the ground on which you place your feet.  
I know that for you I would give my life.  
My life I would give for you (Zayad, Adab.com, n.d.)<sup>4</sup>

In his poem named “ I challenge”

The land will not absorb my blood  
My soul will never rest  
Kill me I challenge you  
Crucify me I challenge u  
My home is my passion  
My flame  
The land is mine  
Its skies are my fond  
My present, my future.  
My nativity. my tomb.  
My blood, my Flush.  
My heart.. My ribs.  
And it’s my father, my sons and my grandfather.  
My heritage, my songs, my flags and my glory.  
My high house and my address of challenge. (Zayad, Adab.com, n.d.)

As described the three poets represented the strong voices that challenged the occupation and portrayed the Al Nakbah and Palestinian suffering, anguish, and resistance in beautiful and powerful pieces of poetry that transformed Palestinian and Arab consciousness. The three of them used the land metaphorically as mother, as lover, and as home. The three poets excelled in writing about the Intifada because that poetry was the most moving in their heritage.

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<sup>3</sup> Why twenty? Because the second occupation took place almost twenty years after 1948.

<sup>4</sup> This poem was sung by the famous Marcel Khleifah and became one of the iconic revolution songs.



The three writers' voices of resistance and challenge grew stronger and louder after the defeat of 1967; their anger about yet another occupation after the initial 1948 one broke the walls of isolation that had encapsulated them since 1948. Post 1967, these poets and their poetry served to connect different areas of Palestine despite the consistent attempts of the Israeli forces to shut them up through imprisonment and marginalization.

## **Part II: Literature of Post-Al-Nakbah Generation:**

**In this part we will explore the writings of three other Palestinian poets**

**I: Suleiman Daghash** was born in 1952 in AlMaghar village. His father was one of the freedom old, accused of tearing off the Israeli flag, he was sentenced a fine 25 Lire, which was a big amount at that time (Daghash S. , n.d.).

In 1972 he published an anthology entitled "My identity is my land;" he kept the vocabulary of his mentors from the older generation in describing his identity metaphorically as the land, the mother, and the lover. He says in his first poem "Loyalty:"

The land fed me its breasts and to the land is my loyalty...  
The land fed me and a breast is belonging  
He who takes milk from a breast is likely to worship a god in the skies  
(Daghash, 1979)<sup>5</sup>.

Daghash refused to serve in the Israeli army and was jailed for four years were he wrote:

In prison my love grows bigger  
My heart doesn't know the cuffs  
If you [my people] ask for my eyes willingly I will obey  
Despite my cuffs I keep on going to the sun and walk on my path (Daghash, 1979).

About his identity he said:

I have an Arabic heart,  
A heart like the mountains of my home land  
I will never be humiliated  
Will never betray  
I am a proud shadow who draws by his blood a pure face of history  
I will stay forever struggling...will refuse all attempts to undermine me  
I will stay forever Palestinian (Daghash, 1979).<sup>6</sup>

His later poems were collected in 2003 in an anthology entitled: "The Last Water." In his poem "Two Tanks Away," he uses an expression from the Quran to describe the confrontations and bombardment" (Daghash, 2003, p. 81).

We knelt to Adam when the angels thus dictated  
So why is Heaven falling down?  
We will create Paradise for the angels

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<sup>5</sup> The poems were sent by its author as an attachment with no page number

<sup>6</sup> Daghash's expression of his identity is quite audacious and powerful since he is actually an Israeli citizen who was born in Israel. He sounds fearless when he says: I will stay forever Palestinian.

Here on earth  
To dance at the rooftop of our dreams...  
Prepare what kinds of deaths you have  
We will shake the dust off like the Sphinx  
And fly over the fires...  
We will live at an arm's length from your tanks! (Daghash, p. 77)

## **II: Naseem Atef Al-Assadi:**

Alasadi was born in 1979 in AlJaleel. He works as teacher of Arabic language in his village school. In his poem entitled "When you will understand?" he declares his national identity clearly, challenging the Israelis:

When you will understand that our youngsters are like our mountains and our plains  
Our wrists were created to raise flags  
Never will we be defeated...  
The world will perish before we are defeated.  
When you will understand that the land is our yard, our goal, and our compass...  
When will you understand that we will never accept humiliation  
No matter how long  
The neighing of our horses  
Will extinguish your vague voices...  
When you will understand that we are the people of strife  
Struggle, peace and the people of ferocity  
Except for God we never prostrate.  
When you will understand? I think you don't (Al-Asadi, 2013, pp. 43-45).

In another poem "Scriptures on the Time Wall," he calls for revolution and the land is always present as most of the writers do. Al-Assadi address the land as a symbol of resistance, a place and space of belonging:

Revolt my land every time the blood revolts...  
Rejoice my land, your people are coming...  
How long the night of the oppressor will last?  
It will come to an end and be defeated.  
Don't think the Aqsa mosque can be humiliated  
It has free people ready to redeem it.  
Smile my land your people never died  
And we will always taste bitter on their tongues (Al-Assadi, pp.52-53).

Finally, Al-Assadi addresses the Arab people while expressing his identification with the Arab Spring revolutions; he sees those uprisings as a beacon of hope and a light for the *1948 Palestinians*

In "After the Victory," he says:

Hay Arabs rise up against destiny  
to teach our youngsters that ours are lands of people of freedom  
people who break the shackles on their souls by sunrise (Al-assadi: 73).

### **III: Kamleh Badarneh:**

Badarneh is a writer from Arrabit AlBotouf village; she is in her early forties and published her first book in 2000. The book comprises two studies on Palestinian folkloric narratives and the image of the Palestinian Arab woman within that folklore. Another book she authored is “One Autumn.”

In this book, Badarneh metaphorically represents the Palestinian identity as a wheat plant; her anger about Al-Nakbah and the usurpation of the land is focused on some of the landlords who were traitors and sold their lands to Israel. The Israeli in her story is reflected as a stranger who lures the protagonist Abu Mahmoud’s friend, Abu Said, into planting vegetables in his land instead of olives. Olives for Palestinians represent their identity, endurance, determination and millennia of living in Palestine. Abu Mahmoud admonishes his friend, Abu Said, because he feels that he compromised his principles and acquiesced to the power of the stranger. “Damn you Abu Said, I didn’t know you were stupid! Mice could attack you and build their houses and settle in your land; worms will eat your harvest, the mite of the wood threaten your abode, aren’t you aware of all of that?” (Badarneh, *One Autumn*, 2012).

### **IV: Sayed Qashou:**

Sayed Qashou is an important author from the young generation of Palestinian Israeli Arabs. He was born in 1975. He works as a Journalist in the Haaretz newspaper and writes in Hebrew. One of his novels, *Let It be Morning*, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His Comedy TV series gave him a lot of fame and his novel *Dancing Arabs* was translated to six languages.

In *Dancing Arabs* Qashou authors five short stories as diaries of the family life of a Palestinian Arabic family of 1948 Palestine. It is autobiographical in nature. The first two stories are about his childhood. The third story “I wanted to be Jewish,” describes the most tragic period of his life. He had a most humiliating experience during the first week of his enrolment in a prestigious Israeli boarding school. He was the only Arab among his Israeli schoolmates and was ordered by a soldier to get off the school bus when he discovered he was an Arab (Qashou, *Dancing Arabs*, 2011, P. 82).

This demonstrates that even when an Arab accepts to integrate into the Israeli society and adapts to the Israeli culture and identity, he still is considered a stranger and a threat! This is the apartheid reality of Israel.

His second novel is about the Arabs who accepted the existence of Israel. He narrates the story of an Arab-Israeli journalist (autobiographical in nature) who works at a famous Israeli newspaper and lives in an Israeli city. This journalist grew up in a family where his father believed in the establishment of the Israeli state since its beginning (Qashou, *Let It be Morning*, 2012).

I used to fight with my friends who used to say that my father is a traitor, I used to lose my temper and shout that they are jealous of me and sob.

About the Palestinian Intifada and the killing of Arab Israeli protesters by the Israeli army, he says:

Something has been broken inside, something has died, 48 hours of protests were able to put the State in a situation of questioning the citizenship given to Arab residents, and those two days were able to bring forward all the Israeli rage and hatred (Qashou, 2012, p. 23).

Qashou's life changed after the Palestinian Intifada; there were limits on the news coverage in the West Bank while his Jewish colleagues were given all the freedom they wanted to cover what was going on:

Only Jews have the privilege of criticizing their government; if I do it I will be accused of aiming at destroying the Zionist State (Qashou, 2012, p. 25).

He had to move from Tel Aviv to his Arab village of Beit Safafa<sup>7</sup> As the Israeli siege tightens around the Palestinians, he creates a situation at the end of the novel where a two-state solution is declared. Therein is the open-ended question: What if? He assumes that his village will be under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority and that he is living there. He portrays the protagonist (himself) as a bewildered person at the end of the novel. (Qashou, 2012, pp. 238-239).

### **Conclusion:**

This study has attempted to answer the following questions:

How successful were the measures taken by the Israelis to diminish the Arabic identity of Palestine from the perception and feelings of its people?

What were the factors that preserved the identity of a people under occupation?

What are the cultural tools that the 1948 Palestinians used to express their identity?

Through this analysis of two generations of Palestinian Arab Israeli writers, we notice that themes they discussed in their novels, poems and narratives are similar. What seems to be prominent is the trinity of the land (earth), the lover, and the mother. The source of pride of those authors was the fact that they were indeed living on the land of Palestine and never left. The earlier generation mourned the loss of the land to the Israelis, described their suffering in jail, challenged their oppressors and celebrated the Palestinian revolution in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Even though the younger generation of writers were preoccupied with the same ideas, they went beyond the earlier generation when they identified with the Arab Spring and movements or uprising in the Arab world. Despite the fact that the younger generation of writers were born in Israel, went to Israeli schools, spoke Hebrew and worked in Israeli environments, they continued to suffer even more poignantly when it came to their Palestinian identity. Even those of them who attempted to integrate within Israeli society were refused by Israeli apartheid policies. As such, they were in

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<sup>7</sup> The majority of Arab villages in Israel are inhabited by Arabs only. Cities are mixed.

even deeper pain and anguish because, on the one hand, they were let down by the Israeli society when they attempted to adapt to its culture, and on the other hand, they were not able to (nor are they still able to) be absorbed by the Palestinian society. So they are in reality really alienated, strangers in a society that they grew up in.

The questions of the study have therefore been addressed. The importance of this study rests in the timeliness of the question of identity. Today Israel is still working on legally identifying the country as a “Jewish” state, which in effect means the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of both Christian and Muslim Palestinian Arabs from Israel.

## Appendix One

The first Arab Canaanite tribes arrived around 3200 B.C. and settled on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the land that came to be known later as Palestine. For centuries, the indigenous population of that land witnessed the creation and dismantling of many kingdoms and states through invasion, colonization, war, and emigration. Palestine was at the crossroad of many civilizations (Hitti, 1951).

Arab Canaanites composed the tissue fiber of this land; they built their capital in Jerusalem and they became prominent merchants of the sea. They discovered the Canaan color/ purple from the Orax shells<sup>8</sup> and they traded in colored glass, pottery, brass, metal and cutlery tools. They gave humanity the precious alphabetical letters which replaced the Egyptian figure letters.

The question of the Palestinian identity emerged as a concern for Palestinians and Israelis alike, as Ghada Karmi explains in the Introduction to her book that: “The Israeli’s Dilemma in Palestine and the cause of Palestinian tragedy” that Zionism was attempting in its project to create a common identity for a people with a common religion (Judaism) who had never lived as one people before while, on the other hand, uprooting another people (the Palestinians) who had roots in the land and lived consistently in it for thousands of years (Karmi, 2007). The Palestinians had a rich culture, heritage and civilization and occupation and expulsion attempted to erase their indigenous identity.

These concerns materialized and became a threat to the Palestinian Arab population’s cultural and national identity in Palestine. The political deal was sealed when the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, issued the famous Balfour Declaration during the British mandate.<sup>9</sup>This declaration was perceived by Arabs in Palestine as “The promise of those who do not own to those who do not deserve”

With the help of the British forces and the two World Wars that erupted in Europe, the number of Jews in Palestine increased from 28,000 in 1914 to 650,000 after World War II. The creation of the state of

Israel took place on May 15, 1948. The well-trained Zionist militias defeated the Palestinian Arabs who had no army<sup>10</sup> and were fighting a guerilla attacks against the invaders. What ensued was the expulsion of eight hundred thousand Palestinian citizens out of their homes and lands. In May of 1948 only a minority of Palestinian Muslim and Christians remained in Palestine (Abugabeyeh, 2004)

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<sup>8</sup> This was later to become the Royal and Papal color.

<sup>9</sup> His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

<sup>10</sup> The Palestinians were not allowed to have an army by the colonizing power Britain nor to own any weapons while the Zionist militias were flooding into the country with arms and committing assaults and massacres. Reference.

## **Appendix Two:**

### **Definitions:**

*1948 Palestinians:* are the citizens of historical Palestine and their descendants who could survive and stay in Palestine and became citizens of the state of Israel.

*Intifada:* is the uprising against occupation in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

### **Important Dates:**

1948: Al-Nakbah, were the state of Israel was created on the most fertile parts of Palestinian lands, and Arabs were under the military rule till 1967. They call themselves 1948 Arabs, or the sons of Canaan, their great ancestor.

1967: Were Israel occupied the other parts of the land of Palestine which was annexed to Jordan in 1948 to be called the west Bank of the Jordan's river, and the last part of Palestine land which was annexed to Egypt to be called Gaza strip.

1987: the first intifada, which witnessed the raise of Hamas, the Islamist movement in the Palestinian resistance.

1988: the PLO's declaration of recognizing the Palestine state on the 1967 borders, which means the acceptance of the Jewish state on the 1948 occupied lands by the Palestinians.

1991: the launching of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

1996: the signing of Oslo agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

2000: the eruption of the second intifada, which was more armed revolutions.

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