

stones and drought, waiting for nature's generosity or stinginess. Yet he is willing to defend his modest plot of land and die for it - for the sake of human dignity alone. The peasant in Kanafani's view is a positive model. He searches for an aesthetic formulation of the peasant, creating him artistically.

This humble and militant human becomes a model for the human value of justice. The beautifully rendered character of Um Sa'ad is one example of such a peasant. A strong woman who defends her dignity tooth and nail, her memory does not forget the lessons of time. She rushes to the miserable tent in the refugee camp to cart out the dust and mud, and hurries to the «new tent» to welcome the commando who is moving nearer to the land, thus exposing the traitors of today and yesterday.

Kanafani is not enthralled with abstractions and does not create aesthetic heroes without a reason. He does so in order to manifest the virtues of revolution and resistance. It's as though one cannot approach true beauty unless his views and behavior approximate the peasants who carry their land in their hearts and never capitulate to their misery, nor to the defeat they have faced.

Resistance is a pre-condition for the existence of the human being who is worthy of his humanity and the land which grants him dignity and stability. Kanafani chose to glorify the peasants because they represent the struggling masses. Historically, the peasants constituted the majority of the Palestinian population and were bound to the land, always ready to defend it. They carry in their hearts and minds the popular national heritage and represent the embodiment of the national culture, personifying the history and civilization of Palestine. They are a peculiar composite of rain, olives, guns, bread and white cemeteries.

It is not by coincidence that Kanafani always dreamt of writing the militant history of the Palestinian peasants. This is manifested in the unfinished novel *The Lover*, where poetic collusion is exhibited between the land and the peasant. This creature with his ragged *kumbaz* (peasant garment) and beautiful adeptness, speaks to the mare and the stone and appeals to the pastures, and they all reply, just as if the difference between the human being and nature had vanished. In *The Lover*, the peasant and the land are

not detached; the land is in the peasant, and the peasant is in the land. They are one entity, entwined and inseparable.

Although Kanafani did not finish this novel, neither did he abandon the original idea, incorporating it later in *Of Men and Rifles*, where the peasant from *The Lover* is reincarnated as a new commando. This character is somewhat different than the peasant in the *The Lover* in his language, attire and setting, for each have their own time and history. This diversion is not intrinsic, however, because the relation between the two is not based on weapons or costume, but on common values shared by both. The first one as well as the second is searching for his land, history and identity, which is restored through his struggle to regain his land.

To Kanafani, the difference between the homeland and exile is the same as the difference between fertile land and the desert. Whereas fertile land is a metaphor for earthly paradise, the desert, on the other hand, is synonymous with death. If relations are defined through their antithesis, the barren and burning desert is the opposite of the green and fertile land. Hence the desert plays an important role in *Men in the Sun*; it is the stage on which the tragedy of exile is performed. Leaving one's country can lead to the desert, where an undignified death awaits. Perhaps the desert is a severe punishment for leaving the

land; that is why Abu Qais remembers the moisture of the land when he is under the desert sun, comparing it to paradise and his wife.

In *All That is Left for You*, Kanafani employs the symbol of the desert again, situating the miserable camp in the midst of it. Returning home requires crossing the desert. This crossing has a double meaning: on the one hand, it indicates the great effort needed to return and, on the other hand, it reflects the imminent punishment which besets Palestinians living in camps in exile.

The eerie desert is silent and frightening. It's full of fear and surprises, and is a constant reminder of gratuitous death. It possesses an ominous solitude in an open space with no walls, all the while reflecting the qualities of the land, human warmth and the rhythm which expresses the time and place.

The peasant in Kanafani's literature is always a human being with a simple consciousness - one who knows the meaning of the land and defends it. Therefore he sadly and often tragically seeks to acquire a weapon, however old or worn-out, even if it means giving up his most valuable possessions for it, as in *The Cannon*, or suffering the most severe hardships, as in *The Bride*.

In all these situations, the peasant does not like weapons; he likes his land which is his identity, his homeland and his means of subsistence. ●

