



*Women's moral force has proven itself during the intifada.*

shocked by electricity or struck by lightning. She lowered her head in awful calmness, and I felt my hand, which was then lying in hers, becoming wet with big, hot tears.

«Tell me, Nadia, don't you like the red trousers?» She raised her head towards me, and looked as though she would speak; but, her voice failing, she clenched her teeth. From the heart of the murderous silence that followed, her faint voice reached my ears, as if coming from afar: «Uncle!» She stretched her hand and removed the white blanket that covered her body. Then, she pointed at her legs – her *one* leg, as the other was not there!

Having described this horrible discovery, the narrator now depicts its dramatic effect on him:

I'll never forget Nadia's sisterless leg. Nor can I forget the sadness that stamped her face and moulded her countenance. As I left the hospital and walked through Gaza's streets that day, my hand, tightly closed, pressed scornfully against the two pounds I had intended to give to Nadia. The bright sun filled the streets with the colour of *blood*. Gaza, dear Mustafa, was new, *quite new*. You and I had never seen it like that. Even the heaps of stones in front of Al Shaj'a'iyeh quarter, where we lived, were meaningful. Gaza itself assumed a new appearance, and a new meaning; I felt it was a *beginning*. Even the road to my house seemed to me nothing but a step to a long, long road leading to Safad. Everything in Gaza was shuddering in grief for Nadia's severed leg, grief and something else: a challenge, a will to restore the severed leg. I was told that Nadia lost her leg when she threw herself over her little brothers and sisters to protect them from the bombs and flames that were devouring their house. Nadia could have saved herself, could have spared her leg. Why didn't she?

Finally the narrator states his decision and points out his reasons for making it:

No, my friend, I'll not come to Sacramento. Nor am I sorry for that ... That vague feeling you had when you left Gaza – that pygmy feeling must grow into a giant in your heart... If it does not grow by itself, you have to look for it in order to find yourself... here amongst the rubble of the ugly defeat.

I'll not join you. You ought to rejoin us, so that you may learn from Nadia's severed leg what life is, what the value of existence is. Come back, my friend; we are all waiting for you.

### **III. «The Land of Sad Oranges»**

This story depicts the forced departure from Palestine in 1948 of a large Jaffa family. As they approach the Lebanese border, they see a farmer selling oranges at the side of the road. (Oranges are to Jaffa what, say, coffee is to Brazil.) At that moment, the *women* tell the driver of the truck carrying them to stop, and they all get off the truck. The narrator, a young boy of that family, describes the scene as follows:

The women carried the oranges, and we could hear them crying. It was only then that I realized that oranges were beloved things to us; that those big, clean balls were so dear to us. They bought the oranges and brought them up to the back of the truck, where they had been sitting amongst the luggage. Then, your father, who was sitting in front beside the driver, came down and raised his hand to the women for an orange. Having got one, he looked at it in silence, and then burst into tears like a helpless, miserable child.

### **Source of positive values**

It must have been noticed that each one of the stories summarized above dramatized a crucial event in the life of the hero. In each case, moreover, this event is of utmost *positive* significance; it has everything to do with the hero's status not only as a husband, uncle, citizen, freedom fighter, etc., but also as a human being. In «Till We Return» (henceforth referred to as «Till...»), for example, the hero's decision to defend his orchard and, having lost it, to come back several years later and attack its usurpers, is not only a crucial decision, not only an all – important moral choice, but an unfailing positive index to his *nature*, his *mind* and his *dreams*. No less significant is Nadia's uncle's decision in «A Letter...» to remain in Gaza, ►