

abandoning his personal aspirations for the sake of a greater and nobler cause.

What concerns us here, however, is that in both cases, the male's attitude was not so positive from the beginning – indeed, it was negative – and that, more significantly, the positive change is brought about by a female's influence. Nadia's «sisterless leg» and the «big tear» in the eye of the hero's wife in «Till...» do the whole job, symbolically.

The same thing can be said of «The Land...». It is the women who first see the organic connection between Jaffa and the oranges, who first conceive the immensity of their disaster and who, automatically and unwittingly, trigger a corresponding sentiment in the heart of the hero.

In fact, these are not the only works of Kanafani where this peculiar moral «mechanism» determines the whole action, underlies the hero's moral choice and, quite often, defines the theme(s). It is uncertain whether he himself was aware of this mechanism, but whether or not he intended it, it is at work in a considerable number of his works, including the ones we are examining now. Its presence does not so much reflect a certain feminist belief held by the writer as it, indeed, mirrors a cornerstone of human life, namely, the crucial, though often subtle, moral force exerted by females on the behaviour of all members of the community, *especially* the males.

Again, it is uncertain (and unimportant to us) whether the writer was conscious of this peculiar force: the artist, whether we think of him as one who reflects or reconstructs reality, or even as one who creates a reality of its own, need not be conscious of all the subtle laws that govern the reality he is dealing with. It is well known, for instance, that Shakespeare is rich in «psychology,» but few would contend that he was *aware* of the various and complex psychological laws governing the behaviour of his characters.

But so far we have not explained what we mean by the peculiar moral force we ascribed to the woman in the previous paragraphs. To do so, we have (first) to consider the particularity of the female condition, and (second) to examine the way this particularity is manifested in the works in hand.

Let us take the first point. Most people now recognize not only the sacrifice and extraordinary responsibility that are

inherent in the woman's condition, especially at the reproductive level, but also her crucial role in determining the psychological, emotional and sexual lives of her children. It is wrongly assumed, however, that her role decreases as they grow up. True, their biological and emotional dependence on her does decrease; yet she continues to influence the males around her at a higher plane of experience – *morally*. The point is that while her biological and psychological effect on her children, especially during the early phases of their existence, is easily accessible to empirical observation and analysis, her tremendous and equally crucial, moral effect on the adult, especially the male adult, seems to defy the empirical approach which dominates the science today. Thus, the point we are dealing with here seems to fall within the province, not of science, but of moral philosophy, which conceives of the methods used by scientists as useful and necessary, but by no means adequate for analyzing and obtaining a comprehensive understanding of experience in its entirety, rather than in bits and pieces. Yet, it must be asked here: What has all this to do with Kanafani's stories?

This question brings us to the second point. It has been shown that in each of the stories, the male's positive response to experience – such as the hero's decision to remain in Gaza – is stimulated by a female's positive initiative. Likewise, the male's sudden realization of the immensity of his loss in «The Land...», which is symbolized by his crying over the oranges, is triggered by the *women's* action. The key question to be asked here is: is it mere coincidence that it is the women, rather than the man, who first see the oranges, which epitomize their homeland, their Paradise Lost? If so, why do *they*, rather than he, go and buy them, although he could do so more easily as they were sitting «amongst the luggage» behind, whereas he was sitting «beside the driver» in front? Apart from convenience, the customary thing in our culture is that, in such a situation, it is the man who undertakes the purchasing. Far from being a «realism gap,» Kanafani's reversal of roles, while giving the female the chance to exert her peculiar moral force on the male, is essentially his way, as an artist, of saying that convenience and custom, which determine what the female ought or ought not to do at the social level, are irrelevant to an experience whose focus is a value greater than convention, such as patriotism. A major philosophical implication of this is that the female's power increases as we move from lower to higher planes of experience.

Again, when he initially decides to leave his orchard, the hero of «Till...» suddenly changes his mind upon seeing that powerful tear in his wife's eyes. Her eye, which secretes tears at the lowest (physical) level of experience, is here a source of moral radiation at the highest. Similarly, Nadia's «sisterless leg,» though a *physical handicap* for her, is yet a generator of *moral power* for her uncle.

### The woman's moral force

It is interesting to note that, in all these stories, the female's amazing ability to influence the male's moral behaviour has nothing to do with her/his strength or weakness, nor is it due to any social prestige. Let us read again this quotation from «Till...»:

He *pulled* his wife by the hand and set off, but before he reached the gate of his field, he drew close to her and was stunned by a big tear in one of her wide eyes...(emphasis added)

A little later we come to know that this tear stimulated the greatest moral choice in all his life. Notice Kanafani's shrewd use of the verb *pulled* to signify the male's tendency to impose his will on the female, to have the upper hand in «doing things.» Immediately after, however, we read:

