

THE STORYTELLER'S MIRROR: THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN CONFLICT  
REFLECTED IN SELECTED WORKS OF FICTION

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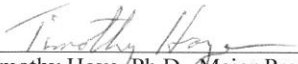
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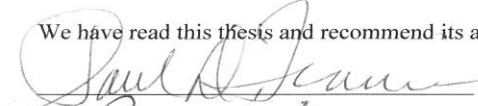
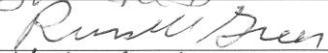
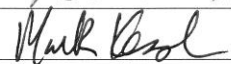
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:


I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michan Rule-Chowritmootoo entitled "The Storyteller's Mirror: The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict Reflected in Selected Works of Fiction." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Government.

  
Timothy Hoyer, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

  
  
  
Department Chair

Accepted:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

MICHAN RULE-CHOWRITMOOTOO

### THE STORYTELLER'S MIRROR: THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN CONFLICT REFLECTED IN SELECTED WORKS OF FICTION

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Literature, in particular great literature, provides the reader with a literary reflection of real life, a sort of mirror image. Philosopher Ernst Cassirer in his collection of essays, *An Essay on Man*, a gateway which links philosophy to human existence; and by utilizing this connection between literature and philosophy, storytellers have the ability “to unmask” what is hidden in order to reveal the nature of man, so that man can achieve what Cassirer asserts is the highest level of logos: “self – knowledge.” The purpose of this research is to demonstrate this connection between literature, politics, and philosophy. In doing so I hope to demonstrate the importance of studying the humanities as a whole.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose of the Study**

Research conducted by Dr. Marco Bertamini, a psychologist from the University of Liverpool, evaluated how a person perceived reflected images; he argued that most people are unaware that “the location of the viewer matters in terms of what is visible [and reflected] in a mirror.” According to Bertamini “[m]irrors make us see virtual objects that exist in a virtual world;” as such, mirrors serve as “windows onto this world.”<sup>1</sup> The image reflected while appearing to the human eye to be identical is in fact a virtually identical image reflected from an opposing view.

Literature, in particular great literature, employs a similar concept; it provides the reader with a literary reflection of real life, a sort of mirror image. Philosopher Ernst Cassirer argued that literature presents its readers with a portal to philosophy. It provides a gateway which links philosophy to human existence; and by utilizing this connection between literature and philosophy, storytellers have the ability “to unmask”<sup>2</sup> what

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown. Humans do not understand mirror reflections, say researchers. [www.physorg.com](http://www.physorg.com). December 21, 2005. Accessed Oct 8 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. *An essay on man*. Pg73. Yale University 1944



is hidden in order to reveal the nature of man, so that man can achieve what Cassirer asserts is the highest level of logos: “self – knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

As authors intricately weave their stories, either subconsciously or consciously, their beliefs, biases, political ideology, history and culture often blend seamlessly with the ink as it glides across the barren page. Eduard Said argued there is a “special symbolic role” a writer has “as an intellectual” and that is to “testify to a country’s or region’s experience, thereby giving that experience a public identity forever inscribed in the global discursive agenda.”<sup>4</sup> With Cassirer and Said’s philosophies in mind, the purpose of this research is to explore the gateway between philosophical rhetoric and the storyteller’s interpretation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an attempt to “unmask” the conflict.

### **Research Methodology**

Literature brings together philosophy and politics, forming them into characters, personalities, and places; the end product being a link connecting philosophy and politics. By forming these concepts into characters and stories, the storyteller provides their reader with a personal connection, making them witnesses to the lives of the characters. It is through this connection that a storyteller helps the

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<sup>3</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. An essay on man. Pg1. Yale University 1944

<sup>4</sup> Said, Edward, Small Helen. The public intellectual. Blackwell Publishing Oxford UK. 2002 accessed December 2010. [books.google.com/books?isbn=0470776730](https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0470776730).

reader understand the underlying nature of a political conflict such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Using the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), Ernst Cassirer (*An Essay on Man*), Amos Oz (*Under This Blazing Light*) and Eduard Said (*Orientalism*) in conjunction with the following novels: J.M.G. Le Clézio's *Wandering Star*, Ghassan Kanafani's *All That's Left to You*, *Beggar at Damascus Gate* by Yasmin Zahran, Benjamin Tammuz's *Requiem for Na'aman*, and Shifra Horn's *Four Mothers* this paper will evaluate the portrayal of the conflict in selected works of fiction. In addition a historical overview, from the establishment of the Jewish Mandate in 1919 to the Second Intifada, will be provided as background which helps to provide an understanding of the intricacies and dualistic nature of the conflict.

History is ever present, evolving; history is the pulse of human life, its experience, stuck on a continuous loop, doomed to repeat itself until its players have learned from their mistakes. The lessons we have taken from history *have* shown us how to evolve outward, repeating the mistakes of our predecessors in another, often more elaborate manner. As such many of the characters in history's play appear as if they are simply changing roles with the character standing to the left of them. Literature often provides its reader with a satirical account of these

stories; it holds up a literary mirror, challenging the reader to look at their own hypocrisy.

### Upon this Foundation

In 1919 when the British defeated the Ottoman Empire and created the Palestinian Mandate, the British government worked out an agreement with the World Zionist Organization, against protests from Palestine, that permitted Jews from Europe to immigrate in *controlled numbers* to the British governed Palestinian Mandate. Many historians point to this decision as being the pivotal moment in which the conflict, as we now know it, evolved from. This chapter will review the mandate and the subsequent policies that have followed in an effort to provide a brief insight into the conflict and its players, for in order to know where you have gone you must first know from where you began.

### “A Linguistic Bridge”

Ernst Cassirer argues that the use of language can serve to unite or divide people, and it is through the understanding of language that we have the ability to identify and understand one another. This chapter will consider how each of the authors uses language to convey their message through their characters. In an attempt to determine what role language and dialogue plays between the two countries this chapter will review a character from each of the five novels: Kanafani’s Hamid, Tammuz’s

Bella – Yaffa, Horn’s Pnina – Mazal, Zahran’s Rayya, and Le Clezio’s Nejma.

### They Say, I Say/ He Says, She Says

Author E.M. Forester once wrote that the beautiful thing about literature “is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote.”<sup>5</sup> This section will be divided into two components: in the first section, I will compare the literature discussing the conflict as it was written from a Palestinian perspective, Ghassan Kanafani’s *All That’s Left to You*, and then from an Israeli perspective, Benjamin Tammuz’s *Requiem for Na’aman*.

The second section will consider what the women have to say about the conflict. Here, as in the previous section, I will look at each voice, Palestinian and Israeli; comparing Yasmine Zahran’s *Beggar at Damascus Gate* (Palestine) and *Four Mothers* by Shifra Horn (Israel) to their male counterparts Kanafani’s *All that’s Left to You* (Palestine), and Benjamin Tammuz’s *Requiem for Na’aman* (Israel).

### Outside World, Inside

This section will compare the way the outside world (Non-Palestinian and Israeli) portrays the conflict in comparison to how the inside world (Palestinian/Israeli) portrays it. The books to be compared

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<sup>5</sup> E.M. Forester.

in this section will be *Wandering Star* (outside world), and *All that's Left to You* (inside world).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images"  
Albert Camus

#### **Selection of Literary Pieces**

Each piece, fiction and non-fiction, was selected for the individual voice it offered. Rhetoric by philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernst Cassirer, Edward Said and Amos Oz were used in conjunction with five novels in an attempt to demonstrate the link between philosophy and literature. Novels representing both sides; Palestinian and Israeli, as well as a voice from the "outside world" (non-Palestinian and non-Israeli), were purposely chosen for their representation of *their side*, biases and all.

#### **Non-Fiction Selection**

##### Philosophers

Cassirer argues that "since the time of stoics [philosophy] has developed a special, very elaborate technique of allegorical interpretation."<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this research, I attempted to select philosophers who spoke to the close relationship that literature and philosophy shared. In addition, I attempted to find philosophers who

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<sup>6</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. An essay on man. Pg73. Yale University 1944

looked at the relationship between culture, religion, language and belonging.

### **Friedrich Nietzsche**

Born in 1844, Friedrich Nietzsche, a German born philosopher, is often credited as being one of the fore-runners of existentialist thought. His philosophy, like Cassirer's, tended to include literature, culture and the humanities. After a short teaching career, Nietzsche spent several years traveling around Europe before suffering a psychological breakdown, which in conjunction with other physical illnesses left him incapacitated.<sup>7</sup> After careful consideration Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was selected for its examination of the link between land, culture and identity.

### **Ernst Cassirer**

Born in 1874, Cassirer, a German philosopher of Jewish ancestry, is credited with uniting humanistic philosophy with scientific philosophy. Cassirer taught philosophy in Hamburg where he later served as the first Rector of Jewish ancestry. After the rise of Hitler, and the Third Reich, Cassirer immigrated to England where he taught at Oxford before

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<sup>7</sup> Wicks, Robert, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2010 Edition), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/nietzsche/>>.

immigrating to the United States where he taught at Yale and Columbia.<sup>8</sup> Cassirer's *An Essay on Man* was selected due to its attempt to reunite the humanities, in particular literature and language, with the study and teaching of philosophy.

### **Edward Said**

Born in Jerusalem in 1935, Edward Said is a philosopher, author, and essayist of Palestinian ancestry. After Israel's 1947 partition of Palestine, Said and his parents relocated to Cairo where they lived with family. After being expelled from Victoria College, his parents sent Said to Massachusetts to attend school. After completing his doctoral degree in comparative literature at Harvard, Said took a teaching position at Columbia University.<sup>9</sup> Said's book *Orientalism* was selected for this research for its insights into how literature portrays Oriental culture and philosophy as well as its views on Israel and Palestine conflict and relationship.

### **Amos Oz**

Author and essayist, Amos Oz, a leading figure in the campaign for peace, was born in Jerusalem in 1939. Among his many awards, Oz was

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<sup>8</sup> Friedman, Michael, "Ernst Cassirer", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/cassirer/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ashcroft, Bill and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said: The paradox of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1999



awarded the French Prix in 1988 and in 1992 was the recipient of the Frankfurt Peace Prize.<sup>10</sup> Oz's *Under the Blazing Sun*, a collection of lectures and essays on the conflict, was selected because it is one of the few scholarly pieces on the subject of the conflict with Palestine written by an Israeli scholar.

### Journals, Biographies and Newspaper Articles

Finding works of nonfiction was a little more difficult than the search for fiction for several reasons. As in my search for fiction, I searched for pieces that offered the *other side*, pieces that were both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian, and found those pieces to be dripping with disdain. The vast majorities lacked logical arguments (either for or against) and were fraught with misinformation and were openly prejudicial, little more than propaganda pieces.

Another complicating factor of the nonfiction selection process was just the sheer abundance of articles and books written on both the Middle Eastern and/or the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. These texts continue to be written on a daily basis and have made it difficult to narrow the selection down. At the time of the research and writing of this thesis, Israeli and Palestinian political officials were engaged in active peace talks. These talks have served to produce even more articles and

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<sup>10</sup> "Oz, Amos", Jewish Virtual Library,  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/oz.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/oz.html)

op-ed pieces concerning the conflict, the peace accords, and a potential two state solution. With events changing daily, I was forced to give myself a cutoff date for collecting research materials. Listed below is a brief overview of a few of the selected articles and books used in the research of this topic.

*One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* by Tom Segev provides historical background on the development of the Palestinian Mandate and the Jewish settlement in its borders. Segev evaluates the role that Zionist leaders and party members in Britain may have influenced the British government's policy in Palestine well before the 1917 Belfour Declaration.

Shlomo Gazit's book, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories*, is written by a retired Major-General in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Gazit's book reviews thirty years of Israeli policy with the U.S., Egypt, Jordan as well as former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's 1969 argument for Palestinian autonomy. For the purpose of this research, it is the Israeli - Palestinian relationship that will be addressed. In addition to Gazit's book, articles such as Gary Sussman's *The Challenge to the Two-State Solution* and Ghada Karmi's *Married to Another Man* will be used to offer differing opinions as to the possible two state solution.

## Novel Selection

The novel selection process for this research was in essence two-fold: several of the novels<sup>11</sup>, Ghassan Kanafani *All That's Left to You* (Palestine), Yasmin Zahran's *A Beggar at Damascus Gate* (Palestine), and J.M.G. Le Clezio's *Wandering Star* (France), were novels which had been selected for a political novels course I was enrolled in; Shifra Horn's *Four Mothers* (Israel) and Benjamin Tammuz's *Requiem for Na'aman* (Israel) were selected to represent the Israeli voice.

### *All That's Left to You*, Ghassan Kanafani

Ghassan Kanafani's book *All That's Left to You* offers a Palestinian male perspective. Kanafani fled his place of birth, Akka, Palestine, after Israeli forces captured the city in 1948. A political novelist and journalist, he was killed when a bomb placed in his car exploded in 1972.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the other novels selected, in *All That's Left to You* Kanafani presents a compellation of several short stories, each focusing on the daily life and existence of Palestinians. For the purpose of this research, only the short story entitled *All That's Left to You* will be used.

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<sup>11</sup> For readers unfamiliar with the novels a brief character synopsis can be found in appendix B

<sup>12</sup> Kanafani, Ghassan. *All that's left to you*. Interlink Books 2004

## Novel Synopsis

Kanafani's short story *All that's Left to You* allows each individual character, except for Zakaria, to speak in their own voice. The story centers on Hamid, his sister Maryim, and Zakaria, Hamid's nemesis and Maryum's lover/husband. The story begins as Hamid is dismissing his pregnant dishonored sister's dowry and follows the events of the day until they end with the death of Hamid, an unnamed Jewish soldier, and Zakaria, at the hand of Hamid's sister, Maryum. Issa Boullata, in her 2005 review of Kanafani's novella for the *Digest of Middle East Studies*, wrote that in *All that's Left to You*, Kanafani artfully portrays "the human condition of people who suffer and yet entertain aspirations for better days."<sup>13</sup> Boullata writes that *All that's Left to You* provides readers with more than just an allegory for Palestine it is a "story of real human beings who experience personal shame and anger for dishonored social status"<sup>14</sup> as represented through the characters Maryam and Hamid.

### *Requiem for Na'aman, Benjamin Tammuz*

Finding a novel, which could serve as a counter-voice to Kanafani's perspective proved to be difficult. I found very few books, in English, written by an Israeli male author that spoke to the conflict with the same

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<sup>13</sup> Boullata, Issa. *All that's left to you: a novella and short stories*. Review. *Digest of Middle East Studies*. Fall 2005

<sup>14</sup> Boullata, Issa. *All that's left to you: a novella and short stories*. Review. *Digest of Middle East Studies*. Fall 2005

passion of Kanafani. Ultimately I selected Benjamin Tammuz's *Requiem for Na'aman*. While a good book on its own accord, Tammuz's novel was actually my second choice, replacing Amos Oz's *Panther in the Basement*. After reading *Panther in the Basement*, I realized how distant the book was from Kanafani's. It lacked the voice and power, and perhaps more importantly it lacked insight or a voice on the conflict; this was largely due to the time setting of the book. For this reason, I found myself forced to select another book, which lead me to *Requiem for Na'aman*. Billed as a Zionist book, I believed it would be a good counterpoint to Kanafani. I have however, discovered that the book is anything but Zionist in nature and still had the basic fundamental problem Oz's book did it lacked a passionate voice on the Palestinian conflict.

Tammuz, like his primary male character Ephraim, was born in Russia. When he was five years old<sup>15</sup> he and his family moved to Israel.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The institute for the translation of Hebrew literature. Tammuz, Benjamin. [http://www.ithl.org.il/author\\_info.asp?id=268](http://www.ithl.org.il/author_info.asp?id=268). accessed Oct 2010

<sup>16</sup> According to his biography page Tammuz migrated to the State of Israel. However I would be remiss if I did not point out that in 1924 the state of Israel did not yet exist.

A known Canaanite<sup>17</sup> Tammuz served as a cultural attaché and has published many popular novels including *Minotaur* which won book of the year in England. His book chronicles the creation of Israel, life on a Kubitiz, communism, the rivalry between *Ashkenazi* and Sephardic Jews, while only briefly touching upon Palestine or her children.

### **Novel Synopsis**

*Requiem for Na'aman*, by Benjamin Tammuz, begins with the suicide of a minor character Bella-Yaffa. The reader is introduced to her as she is explaining to the desert (a substitute for her husband) why she is depressed and decided to commit suicide. The book then follows the life of the loved ones she left behind as they struggle with the reverberations of her death. Her husband who takes long trips abroad, searching for her, her son who moves to France where he commits suicide, and her great-granddaughter namesake who loses her grip on reality. In her 1982 review of *Requiem for Na'aman* for the *Library Journal* Shelley Cox writes that Tammuz's novel while complex and rife with

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<sup>17</sup>The Canaanites movement was a movement which began in the 1950s shortly after Israel declared its independence. They believed that in order to be able to create a new country one must divorce themselves from their Diasporas. As such Canaanites called for Israel to become a new "Hebrew nation," separate from ethnicities. They argued that all "Native-born Jews, Christians, Moslems and various ethnic minorities - together with any foreign-born Jews who chose to join" should unify as one country sharing "the land from the Euphrates basin to the Mediterranean Sea in the spirit of the pre-Abrahamic peoples." Many sociologists have pointed to the similarity in this ideology to that of America's melting pot. Eden, Vivian. Binyamin Tammuz's Vision: A Multi-ethnic 'Hebrew nation'. July 21, 1989, accessed February 22, 2011.

“social satire” and “biting humor” was written for an inside audience, readers familiar with the history of Israel and social nuances of Jewish culture; however those readers “unfamiliar with the setting” and history may find it difficult to appreciate the novel fully.<sup>18</sup>

*A Beggar at Damascus Gate*, Yasmin Zahran

*A Beggar at Damascus Gate* by Yasmin Zahran, a professor of archeology at the Institute of Islamic History in Jerusalem, provides a female Palestinian voice, a counter voice to both Kanafani’s male perspective as well as the Israeli female perspective of author Shifra Horn’s.

**Novel Synopsis**

Set against the backdrop of Petra, Zahran’s book, centers around an archeologist’s discovery of love letters exchanged between a Palestinian woman and her British lover during Palestine’s transition from British mandate to independent state and how their tragic story emulates that of Palestine and her displaced peoples. In her mixed review of *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*, Marilyn Booth, asserts that while the novel is refreshing and helps to fill a void in Arab literature “for they embody the geographic/linguistic/cultural multiplicity that is the marker

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<sup>18</sup> Cox, Shelly. *Requiem for Na'aman*. A Review.

of the postmodern experience”<sup>19</sup> it fails to fully develop its characters and at times tends to stray towards the “cliché.”

*Four Mothers*, Shifra Horn

Shifra Horn’s novel *Four Mothers* provides an Israeli voice as well as the second female voice. A former journalist and spokesperson for the Ministry of Absorption, Horn has won several literary prizes for her novels including the WIZO<sup>20</sup> in 2004 and 2008, and the Brenner Prize in 2008.

**Novel Synopsis**

A bestselling novel in Israel, *Four Mothers* chronicles the lives of five generations of Jewish women living in Jerusalem, Palestine/Israel. The women appear to be cursed to bear only female children and shortly after giving birth or becoming pregnant to be abandoned by their husbands. The story is told primarily by Amal, the fifth generation. In her quest to discover who she is, Amal discovers her familial identity. A *Publishers Weekly* review of suggests that Horn’s *Four Mothers* provides its readers with a story which vibrantly brings to life Jerusalem providing a “personal perspective” to a city “more often defined by its historic and

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<sup>19</sup> Booth, Marilyn

<sup>20</sup> WIZO award is a literary award given by the Women’s International Zionist Organization for an Improved Israeli Society. This award is given to Israeli Citizens who achieve contributions to Israeli society in a humanities field such as sociology or literature. <http://www.wizola.org/page115644.aspx>



political headlines.”<sup>21</sup> The reviewer writes that while the novel’s characters are “frequently overwrought with calamity” the “dense, ponderous” nature of the story lends to its charm.<sup>22</sup>

*Wandering Star*, J.M.G. Le Clezio

Selected for its representation of the outside voice, J.M.G. Le Clezio’s book *Wandering Star*, rounds out the novel selection. Le Clezio was born in Nice, France in 1940. He has received several awards for his novels including the Prix Théophraste Renaudot in 1963, the Prix Prince de Monaco in 1998 and the Nobel Prize in 2008.

**Novel Synopsis**

J.M.G. Le Clezio’s novel, *Wandering Star*, traces the journey of two young women, Esther, a Franco-Jew and Nejma, a Palestinian. Le Clezio’s eloquently attempts to focus on the similarities between the two women and downplay their differences; it is for this reason this book was selected. He begins his novel by introducing the reader to a quaint occupied French village as it is emerging from winter. The novel chronicles the childhood of Esther as she and her mother flee from the encroaching Nazi forces eventually making their way to Palestine. Once Esther arrives in Palestine the reader is introduced to Nejma, a young

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<sup>21</sup> Publishers Weekly. Review

<sup>22</sup> Publishers Weekly.

Palestinian girl Esther's age. Le Clezio then shifts the reader's focus to Nejma as she begins her own forced exile. Alison Kelly in her review of Le Clezio's *Wandering Star* for the *London Observer* noted that the story's most "most powerful qualities" is how it demonstrates the connection between place, identity, and exile. Le Clezio in *Wandering Star* chronicles "the parallel sufferings of Jews and Arabs" providing a "sadly topical retelling of what he calls elsewhere "the greatest, most ancient of all quests: of a habitat".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kelly, Alison. "A Nobel Laureate on the Birth of a Nation: *Wandering Star*." *London Observer* (18 Jan. 2009): 20. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 280. Detroit: Gale, 2010. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 30 Mar. 2011.

### CHAPTER III

#### UPON THIS FOUNDATION

Provenance<sup>24</sup> for art, books, archives, or other tangible artifacts is established through certificates, sales receipts, and other legal documentation, in theory tracing an object back as far as its creation. How does one determine cultural and national identity? If a country is conquered or is no longer recognized, does the identity of its citizens vanish; absorbed into the conquering nation or do they simply cease to be? Does a new country's name bring about a new identity, erasing the old? If removed by conflict and war, at what point does a displaced person lose the right to provenance or their identity? These are but a few of the many underlying questions, which play mitigating roles in understanding the conflict. The purpose of this section is to provide a brief historical overview of the British, Israeli and Palestinian relationship.

To assume this as a modern conflict between conqueror and conquered, Palestinians and Israelis, Jews and Arabs, is to deny and wipe away a millennium of shared history. Deciding how far back in

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<sup>24</sup> A place or source of origin

history to trace the conflict is difficult, like pulling a single loose thread from a tapestry only to watch the entire piece unravel at your feet.

Should I start with the creation of “Palestine” by Rome, or the Spanish Inquisition and Sultan Beyazid II? Should I go further back to Moab, Judah, Israel and Canaan? Most historians and scholars assert that the pivotal starting point in the conflict, as we have come to know it now, began with the British occupation and the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Like finding a place to establish a beginning, finding a point on which to conclude was difficult. Originally, given the engulfing and multifarious nature of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict I had decided to allow the novels to establish the timelines of this chapter. Since each of the novels stop short of the Intifadas I originally intended to end the historical overview with just prior to the Intifadas. However, given the current state of the conflict and the nature of the novels, it feels trivial to limit the scope of this chapter from the British Mandate to the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War. Therefore, this chapter will include a very brief overview of the Camp David accords, the First and Second Intifadas as well as the Oslo Accords.

When tracing the evolution of the Mandate and the conceptual theory of Eretz<sup>25</sup> Israel, one can find themselves party to secret dark room meetings and heated debates between Zionist, anti-Zionists, and high ranking British officials.

### **Zionist Movement and the Jewish Question**

In the Beginning...

#### **Zionism**

Zionism is the belief that Jews, both secular and religious, should return to their ancestral land, now modern-day Israel. This belief is one shared by many evangelical Christian denominations as they believe that restoration of the Jewish ancestral home will signal the “end days”.<sup>26</sup> The Zionist movement was created with the purpose of restoring Jews to their ancestral land, Palestine. According to historian Arthur Hertzberg, the first true rumblings toward the creation of a Jewish state began in 1830 when Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai argued that Jews should “act politically in this world for their restoration to Palestine and not wait passively for divine miracles.”<sup>27</sup> In 1860, these rumblings picked up again under the direction of a former member of the communist party, Moses Hess. In his

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<sup>25</sup> Depending on the translation Eretz Israel can either mean “Land of Israel” or “The Holy Land, Israel”

<sup>26</sup> Many historians argue it is this belief which lead Britain originally to support the Zionist movement in 1917, America’s support in the creation and subsequent maintain of the state of Israel.

<sup>27</sup> Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism and Modernity. Pg 306. The Jewish world: revelation, prophecy and history. Edited by Elie Kedourie. Thames and Hudson. 1979

book *Rome and Jerusalem*, Hess argued it was a political imperative that Palestine be returned to Jews in order for the younger generations to be raised in their own “religio-national culture.”<sup>28</sup> In the late 1880’s, as anti-Semitism grew in Europe, the desire to create a Jewish state increased and in 1882, after reading a Zionist pamphlet written by Zionist Leon Pinsker called *Auto-Emancipation*, a Hungarian born Jew named, Theodor Herzl, emerged on the scene, founding the Zionist organization.

Founded in 1897 by Theodor Herzl, the Zionist Organization was created for the purpose of creating a “home, secured under public law”<sup>29</sup> returning Jews to their ancestral land, Palestine. Membership in the movement was open to both Zionist and non-Zionist alike, part of the membership included payment of dues called “Zionist shekel.” Membership was open to any Jew, male or female, age 18 or older. Membership and payment of the shekel afforded the individual the right to vote on any matter brought publicly before the organization.

Shortly after Herzl’s death, a new player named Chaim Weizmann emerged on the Zionist scene. A Russian Jew, Weizmann, relocated to England in 1904. Within a few weeks of his arriving in London,

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<sup>28</sup> Hertzberg, Arthur. *Judaism and Modernity*. Pg 307. The Jewish world: revelation, prophecy and history. Edited by Elie Kedourie. Thames and Hudson. 1979

<sup>29</sup> Jewish Virtual Library. World Zionist Organization.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/wzo.html>. access date 2/4/2011

Weizmann managed to secure an interview with the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs Eustis Percy. It is through his connection with Percy that Weizmann was introduced to other major political figures including Winston Churchill and Arthur Balfour. Balfour was well aware of the growing "Jewish question;" the fact that he harbored some anti-Semitic ideology was no secret. In 1905, a year after Weizmann's arrival, Balfour had been among one of the strongest sponsors of the law which restricted Jewish immigration to Britain.

Weizmann took great pains to argue the Zionist cause. He claimed that the Zionist interests and British interests were identical. Balfour, along with many other Christian members of the cabinet, began to see Zionist philosophy of Jewish relocation as an integral part of Christian faith. According to historian Thomas Segev, Balfour, and his colleagues in the House of Lords, had come to view the returning of Jews "to their homeland [as] a historic project." <sup>30</sup> George Antonius, a well-known Christian Arab, believed that Balfour and Britain sought Palestine not as a country but as a "historico-intellectual exercise and diversion."<sup>31</sup> Minister of Munitions Edwin Montague argued that if Britain recognized Palestine as a Jewish "national home," every country wanting to get rid of

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<sup>30</sup> Segev One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. pg 45

<sup>31</sup> Segev One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. pg 45

its Jews would expel them to Palestine “where they would live in one large Jewish ghetto.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Mandates and Declarations**

On November 2, 1917 Balfour’s declaration was made public. Despite the fact that the declaration was slanted greatly in the favor of the Zionist movement, they still disputed several key elements in the wording. According to the declaration, Britain would allow Jews to create a Jewish national home that would be “established in Palestine.” It did not declare that Palestine would become the national home of the Jews.<sup>33</sup> Another point the Zionist movement petitioned the British government to modify, and was successful in having changed, was the classification “Jewish race” to “the Jewish people.”<sup>34</sup>

While the British occupation of Palestine without a doubt played a major role in the evolution of the conflict, it was not the catalyst but merely the foundation upon which the conflict has been built. Even the very interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and British enforcement of the declaration is a topic that to this day is debated. According to Harvard professor Oscar Handlin, the declaration by the 1930’s had begun to narrow its interpretation of the declaration placing “artificial

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<sup>32</sup> Segev One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. pg 47

<sup>33</sup> In Balfour’s declaration the original Arab inhabitants of Palestine were referred to as the “non-Jewish community”.

<sup>34</sup> Segev One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. pg 49



restrictions upon”<sup>35</sup> Jews immigrating to Palestine and by 1939 had completely closed the borders of Palestine to Jews, even to the point of turning away those fleeing the Nazi regime.

According to Israeli historian Tom Segev, Palestine had been promised to the Arabs, Zionists, and portions had been promised to France; “The Promised Land had, by the stroke of a pen, become twice-promised”<sup>36</sup> by Britain. Correspondence between the British army and the fledgling Palestinian government had led Palestinian Arabs to believe that in exchange for their support and allegiance in Britain’s war with the Ottoman Empire they would be awarded Palestine. Because they believed that with the sponsorship of the British government Palestine would become independent, the invading British army was seen, by Palestinian Arabs, as a liberating army.

Shortly after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations, Britain, France, Greece, Belgium, Italy and Japan, judging the countries not ready for autonomy, created mandates and divvied up the former providences of the Ottoman Empire. Britain was awarded control of what would become Transjordan and Palestine (see appendix A for 1922 map of the Mandate). Under Article 22 of the 1919 League of

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<sup>35</sup> Handlin, Oscar. *American Jewry*. Pg 280. *The Jewish world: revelation, prophecy and history*. Edited by Elie Kedourie. Thames and Hudson. 1979

<sup>36</sup> Segev, Tom. *One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate*. Henry Holt Publishing Company. New York NY. 1999

Nations, these mandates served two purposes: to operate as trusts with the intention of returning the land to its inhabitants once they had demonstrated the ability to self-govern and the other to instruct in the development of the fledging government. These mandates under article 22 were categorized according to their perceived “political maturity.”<sup>37</sup> Classification A: were countries viewed as being the most developed politically; B: were countries less developed, and; C: the least developed.<sup>38</sup> Palestine – Transjordan, along with several other Arab countries received an “A” classification from the League.

In the beginning, not all Palestinian Arabs were against allowing Zionist Jews to establish a small state or community in Palestine. Several Palestinians believed that the potential Jewish settlers could help teach the newly independent country how to organize and run a government, establish education systems; hospitals and more importantly bring some much needed funds to the area. However this group was in the minority as the majority of Palestinians were against the idea of allowing Jews to immigrate to Palestine, believing that the time for their autonomy had finally arrived. Others believed if Jews arrived in controlled numbers there was enough land to share and live side by side as they had for centuries.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://israelipalestinian.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000484>

<sup>38</sup> <http://israelipalestinian.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000484>

While Palestinians may have not been in agreement on how to handle or view the Zionist movement allowing Jews to return, many could not help but to notice that the rise of the Zionism and subsequent Jewish Nationalism just happened to coincide with Palestine's newly found independence. In 1905, Najib Azuri, a Christian Arab official for the Ottoman Empire, noted in his book that the "two movements [Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism] were destined to wage war until one defeated the other."<sup>39</sup>

The Palestinian Jew and Arab battle for political control over Palestine took on many forms: legislation; negotiations; protests; through campaigns which appeared to be only symbolic, such as making Hebrew an official language alongside English and Arabic, and also through violence, such as the Hebron riots in 1929. A major source of contention for the Arabic officials was immigration. Many Palestinians believed that Britain was not abiding by their agreement which stipulated immigration of European Jews in controlled numbers. These beliefs eventually lead to the Arab revolt in 1936. In effort to assuage their Palestinian Arab allies, Britain implemented a new immigration policy restricting the number of immigrating Jews known as "the White Paper." The White Paper policy was passed in 1939 with the purpose of limiting immigration of Jews

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<sup>39</sup> Segev, Tom. One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. Henry Holt Publishing Company. New York NY. 1999

from Europe to the total of 75,000 over a five year period; at the end of the five years, further immigration of Jews from Europe was contingent on acquiring permission from Palestinian officials. Arguably the passing and enforcement of the White Paper came during one of the worst possible times as Jews were trying to flee from extermination in Nazi Germany. Despite the immigration limitations established by Britain, many Jews, fleeing from the Nazi regime, with the help of the Jewish Agency, continued to immigrate to Palestine. This constant internal conflict between local Arabic and Zionist political officials lead Sir Ronald Storrs to claim that listening to “two hours of Arab grievances drive[s] me to the Synagogue, while after an intense course of Zionist propaganda I am prepared to embrace Islam.”<sup>40</sup>

United in their division, both Palestinians and Jews targeted what was perceived as their mutual obstacle: Britain. It was not until after Britain terminated their mandate, turning over Palestine to the United Nations, and pulled their military forces and local administrative regime out that Palestinians and Jews began to focus their energies on removing or containing the other.

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<sup>40</sup> Segev, Tom. One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. Henry Holt Publishing Company. New York NY. 1999 pg 92

### **Now, that the British are Gone....**

Recovering from World War II the British government found that they were no longer able to control, either militarily or financially, the Palestinian Mandate; therefore they petitioned to have the mandate turned over to the newly formed United Nations. At the suggestion of the British government, the United Nations approved a partition, which would create a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. To avoid any potential conflicts, Britain proposed that the UN make Jerusalem an international city, which would be governed and policed by UN forces. Palestinian Arabs rejected this partition, challenging the creation of the State of Israel, which in turn led to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Catastrophe).

### **1948 Arab-Israeli War (Catastrophe)**

The war, which lasted roughly about a year, ended in 1949 with the signing of the 1949 Armistice Agreements. The agreement established a UN presence in Palestine/Israel; the purpose of the UN presence was to enforce the armistice “greenline” which created borders. Many argue that the agreement brought about an end to the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War. However, I argue that it did not end it; the agreement merely served as a sort of time-out. Skirmishes between Palestine, Israel and other neighboring nations continued to break out. In 1967 under the

advisement of the Egyptian government, the UN withdrew its peace keeping forces, leaving the stage open for the Six Day War (The Setback).

### Six Day War (The Setback)

The war and its precursors was a minefield of convoluted propaganda as to the reason or catalyst for the war. I found hundreds of books, websites and forums devoted to nothing but “making sense of the Six Day War”<sup>41</sup>. There was not one singular catalyst for the Six Day War; it was a series of several events. According to historian and current Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, after several terrorist campaigns against Israel lead by Fatah, the Israeli army responded by entering Samura, a town in the Jordanian occupied West Bank. The encounter between the Israeli forces and Jordanian soldiers left 15 Jordanian soldiers dead. This encounter caused a ripple effect across the Arab and western world; while the UN condemned Israel for the attack, many countries such as Jordan, Egypt and Syria viewed the incident as grounds for war. In the weeks following the incident, Syria, Jordan and Egypt began moving forces closer to the borders they shared with Israel. In May of 1967, Egypt moved to block Israel’s major water trade route a few days after Jordan, Syria, and several other Arab

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<sup>41</sup> Oren. Michael. Making Sense of the Six-Day War. May 2002. *Summary Gil Marder, The Middle East Forum*. <http://www.meforum.org/210/making-sense-of-the-six-day-war>

countries formed a defensive coalition for the purpose of eliminating Israel. Israel, aware of the buildup of Arab forces, “preemptively” attacked. Six days after the attack, the Arab forces were forced to surrender. The end of the war was followed by another mass exodus of Palestinians fleeing to other countries.

#### Yom Kippur War (Ramadan War)

The 1973 Yom Kippur<sup>42</sup> War was the fourth war between the newly independent state of Israel and their Arab neighbors. Unlike previous conflicts and wars, the purpose of this campaign was to destroy Israel. The purpose of the Ramadan War was to reclaim lost Arab territory lost during previous campaigns.<sup>43</sup> Despite the rumblings and the intelligence reports warning of the buildup of Egyptian and Syria forces, Israeli military and government were taken by surprise. Syria sought to regain the Golan Heights area they had lost, and Egypt, now lead by Anwar Sadat, was eager to regain the Sinai Peninsula and the Suez Canal lost in 1967. Before the campaigns began, the Egyptian government sent a peace “feeler”<sup>44</sup> to discuss a limited peace accord between Israel and

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<sup>42</sup> Yom Kippur is one of the most important holidays observed by Jews. It is the Day of Atonement Jews are required to fast (without bed and water) for 25 hours. In addition Jews are supposed to seek forgiveness for slights made and forgive those made against you.

<sup>43</sup> NPR. Mideast History/Yom Kippur War. [http://www.npr.org/news/specials/mideast/history/transcripts/10042002-friday\\_yom.kippur.war.html](http://www.npr.org/news/specials/mideast/history/transcripts/10042002-friday_yom.kippur.war.html). (Accessed date February 28, 2011)

<sup>44</sup> NPR. Mideast History/Yom Kippur War

Egypt which was rejected by Golda Meir who sought a complete “peace treaty.”<sup>45</sup> On the afternoon of Yom Kippur, Egypt and Syria attacked the Suez Canal and Golan Heights and by the end of the first day Egypt had managed to breach the canal, seizing portions of Israeli territory. Once the surprise of the attack wore off, Israeli forces began to recover, fighting back aggressively.

The war lasted 19 days and at the end of the 19 days neither Egypt nor Syria had successfully regained any territory. The ripple effects of the war were felt as far away as Russia and the United States. Moscow at the time was one of the main supporters of the Syrian and Egyptian armies while Washington was the main supporter of Israel. The tensions between Washington and Moscow, during the Yom Kippur/Rammadan War, brought the two cold war enemies to a “nuclear alert.”<sup>46</sup> The war’s end brought Syria, Egypt and Israel to the negotiation table with the US serving as the host. It was this war that some argue placed the US in the position of the main Peacekeeper in the Middle East.<sup>47</sup>

### Camp David Accords

In 1978, then President of the United States, Jimmy Carter hosted the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Prime Minister of

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<sup>45</sup> NPR. Mideast History/Yom Kippur War

<sup>46</sup> NPR. Mideast History/Yom Kippur War.

<sup>47</sup> NPR. Mideast History/Yom Kippur War



Israel at Camp David in an effort to establish a working peace agreement in the Middle East.<sup>48</sup> The negotiations process lasted from September 5<sup>th</sup> until the 17<sup>th</sup>. By the end of that period the three parties developed a workable agreement, which they requested other parties of the conflict to acknowledge and abide by. The agreement between the parties was based on the UN Security Council's resolutions 242 and 338; in addition, the agreement stipulated that the Israeli government "recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian peoples" as well as allowing them to "participate in the determination of their own future." In addition, all parties were to provide the other "full recognition"; they were to end all "economic boycotts" as well as guarantee that all citizens will "enjoy the protection of the due process of law."<sup>49</sup>

#### First Intifada and the Oslo Accords

Years of smaller riots and clashes between Israeli forces and the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip culminated in open revolts and by November of 1987 had evolved into the First Intifada or "Uprising".<sup>50</sup> Palestinian protestors were largely young men and boys. Most were armed with rocks which they threw at Israeli Forces. Despite the protests, Israeli settlers continued to expand and develop property in

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<sup>48</sup> [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/)

<sup>49</sup> [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/)

<sup>50</sup> BBC News. Middle East. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7381369.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7381369.stm)  
Accessed March 13, 2011

the Gaza Strip and West Bank where land was cheaper. The First Intifada helped to unite many Palestinians, but it also helped them to realize that “armed struggle” alone would not be a sufficient method to bring about political change. In 1988 The Palestinian National Council, an exiled government, agreed to a two-state solution. In addition, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) ceased terrorist campaigns against Israel and requested that the Israeli government agree to negotiate an agreement based upon the 1947 UN resolution. Furthermore the Arab nations requested that Israel, over a period of five years, remove their settlers and military forces from the Gaza Strip and West Bank.<sup>51</sup> In 1993, five years after the outline for withdrawal was agreed upon, the Oslo accords were signed in Washington DC.

#### Second Intifada and the Withdrawal from Gaza

Not everyone agreed with the Oslo Accords. Many right wing Palestinians and Israelis denounced the agreement on the basis that each believed that they had conceded too much. In an attempt to upset the fragile agreement, Hamas began to attack Israeli forces and settlers. As the use of suicide bombers began to rise dramatically, Israel responded quickly and more violently. In an attempt to restore the damaged peace accord, President Clinton, Yassar Arafat and Ehud Barak

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<sup>51</sup> BBC News. Middle East. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7381369.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7381369.stm)  
Accessed March 13, 2011

met at Camp David in 2000. However, with the parties unable to agree on issues surrounding the city of Jerusalem and the state of Palestinian refugees, the talks broke down. Within days of the failed talks, the Second Intifada broke out in the West Bank in response the Israeli government re-occupied in response to the terrorist campaigns. In response to the second Intifada, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon decided to pull Israeli forces and settlers out of the Gaza Strip and begin the process of building a wall that would serve to separate Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Unfortunately for the Palestinian Arabs, Britain, under the mandate, “opened up the country to mass Jewish immigration” and by 1948 the Jewish population had increase by almost tenfold.<sup>52</sup> The British mandate, Segev argues, allowed immigrating Jews to establish themselves, develop land, set up settlements, schools, hospitals and banks, create a small army, elect officials, and established a political system all of which were nurtured under the “sponsorship” of the British sanctioned mandate. According to Segev, the dilemma that the young Palestinian government struggled with, and arguably still struggles with, was division. They lacked a united front. They lacked an “organized

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<sup>52</sup> Segev, Tom. One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate. Henry Holt Publishing Company. New York NY. 1999

national movement comparable to the Zionists” and perhaps more importantly the Palestinian Arabs lacked a “recognizable leader.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Segev, Tom. *One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the mandate*. Henry Holt Publishing Company. New York NY. 1999

## CHAPTER IV

### “A LINGUISTIC BRIDGE”<sup>54</sup>

Philosopher Ernst Cassirer, in his 1944 *An Essay on Man*, argued that language and our ability to communicate is central to our *being*. He asserts that we must realize the significant role language plays in our existence if we are to understand the meaning of the universe; for the “gateway to philosophy” is through the medium of language, not “physical phenomena.”<sup>55</sup> Arguably it is the storyteller who has uncovered this gateway connecting language and philosophy. Cassirer theorizes that through literature a reader can discover “reality” for it leads readers to view objectively “human life.”<sup>56</sup> In his 1985 lecture concerning fiction and reality, novelist Amos Oz argued that literary artists or “storytellers” live in the present but are “born with their necks and faces turned backwards,” and it is through a mystical “looking - glass” into this past that grants great literary artists the ability to “peep into some of what was yet to come.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Tammuz, Benjamin. Requiem for na’aman. Pg 213

<sup>55</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. An essay on man. Pg 1111. Yale University 1944

<sup>56</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. An essay on man. Pg 143. Yale University 1972

<sup>57</sup> Oz, Amos. Israeli literature: A case of reality reflecting fiction. The William Jovanovich Lecture at Colorado College Feb 6, 1985.

Cassirer asserts that while words do not possess physical attributes, they are nonetheless not without great power: “logically [language] is elevated to a higher, indeed to the highest rank. The *Logos* becomes the principle of the universe and the first principle of human knowledge.”<sup>58</sup> Author Miriam Weinstein in her book, *Yiddish a Nation of Words*, writes of the importance and the rich cultural connection language has. She argues that “[l]anguage lies at the very core of human identity. Just beyond the glow of the mother’s smile, the feel of a father’s large arms, words tell us who we are.”<sup>59</sup> Eduard Said argued that imperial nations looking to colonize a society learned the importance of language<sup>60</sup>, as there is no quicker way to appeal to “men [than] through their minds, by using their own language.”<sup>61</sup> Language, both oral and written, allows us to communicate with one another, express our feelings, thoughts and ideas. It is the commonality which serves to both divide and unite humanity.

Each of the five books shares a common underlying theme of communication of language. For that reason, this chapter will focus on how each of the artists uses language and how this use of language, in

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<sup>58</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man*. Pg 1111. Yale University 1944

<sup>59</sup> Weinstein, Miriam. *Yiddish: a nation of words*. Ballantine Book. Toronto ON. 2001. Pg 48

<sup>60</sup> Each of the novels selected deal with importance of language.

<sup>61</sup> Said, Eduard. *Orientalism*. Random House. New York NY. 1978. Pg 292

and of itself, is representative of Israel and Palestine's inability to communicate, to hear what has said. For the purpose of this chapter, characters from each of the five books were selected; Le Clézio's Nejma with her journal, Zahran's Rayya and her diaries, Tammuz's Bella-Yaffa and her dictionary, Horn's Pnina-Mazal and her ability to understand anyone, and Kanafani's Hamid and his inability to be understood. It is our basic human need to communicate, to be understood, which allows us to identify with others, to form connections, to find a place where we belong. Yet, language can divide as easily as it unifies. It can create disunity as easily as it creates unity. With the ability to "secure the harmony of culture"<sup>62</sup> language, according to Cassirer, has become "the source of the deepest discords and dissensions" and yet without it there would not be a "community of men."

"the source of the deepest discords and dissensions"

#### Rayya

For Zahran's character Rayya, language not only is the fragile link that keeps her tethered to her Palestinian identity; it is the gateway to betrayal. A tool used by Rayya and Alex to hide their true selves from one another, language, for Rayya, protected her identity, helped her to hold on to her culture, while language for Alex was a tool, to not only hide his

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<sup>62</sup> Cassirer, Ernst. *An essay on man*. Pg 130. Yale University 1972

true intentions, from Rayya but to undermine her connection to who she was. It is only through Alex's death and through Foster's publication of her story that Rayya becomes heard.

### Hamid

For Kanafani's character Hamid, language, is a barrier, that doesn't allow him to be understood. Hamid's story begins with him choking on the words discharging his sister's dowry at her wedding to his nemesis Zakaria, and it ends with his one-sided argument in the dark with an Israeli soldier. The darkness in which Hamid encounters his enemy symbolically represents this inability to communicate. The darkness allows Hamid to see only an outline of a being, a being who doesn't speak the same language as he, instead of another man, like him, wanting to communicate but unable to be understood.

It is this lack of understanding that evolves Hamid from a man, lost and seeking a way out of the desert cloaked in darkness, to a man with a hostage. Despite any hate he may have for Israel, Hamid finds that his inability to communicate with their representative prevents him from knowing this enemy, his name or his purpose, making him an "apparition." Finding he is unable to kill what he doesn't know, Hamid sets out to give his hostage a "name and a purpose," for only when his Israel has an identity that killing him have "some sort of value." Hamid's



inability to communicate who he is combined with his inability to know his hostage has the two of them locked in a “vicious circle,” unable to understand or communicate with one another. They, Palestine and Israel, are destined to remain locked in the deep discord of miscommunication.

### **“community of men”**

#### Pnina-Mazal

While language created discord for Rayya and Hamid, for Horn’s Pnina-Mazal, it has the opposite effect. Language allows her to mediate and unite others. Pnina-Mazal’s older brother Yitzhak was born mentally handicapped. As a child he was unable to speak, understand, or smile. Concerned for Yitzhak’s health, his father decided the family should move back to his home country of Salonika to see that Yitzhak received proper medical care. It is during this trip that Sara, Pnina-Mazal’s mother, becomes pregnant with her. Several months after their arrival, Sara and her husband were told by the doctor that Yitzhak was destined to live like a “wild animal” unable to understand or be understood. Horn tells the reader that the news of her son’s future caused Sara to go into labor prematurely, giving birth to a baby “the size of two fists”.

From the time Pnina-Mazal was one year old, she was able to speak in the language of “her parents, her grandparents,” the language of

the kitchen maid, and the language of her brother. According to Horn, Pnina-Mazal, had an ability to understand what people were saying regardless of the language, silent or spoken. It was this gift that enabled her, as a newly single mother, to find employment as a translator for the occupying British army. It seems as if Pnina-Mazal's purpose was to unify people who were separated by an inability to communicate.

### Nejma

Language for Le Clézio was a non-issue. The fact that Nejma spoke Arabic and Esther, a Franco-Jew, spoke French was of no consequence for it was their shared experience and not language that joined these two women. From the moment of their chance encounter to her last appearance in the novel, Nejma writes faithfully in her journal believing that Esther will someday read of her experience and come to her aid. For Nejma the fact that they speak different languages means little for she believes that Esther is able to understand her and she is able to understand Esther. Displaced and wandering the desert, Nejma (Palestine) longs to be able to communicate with Esther (Israel), to share experiences and through those shared experiences find a common bond that will serve to unify them. It is apparent to the reader as the novel progresses that this conversation is a one-sided one; and by the novel's

end it is clear that the exchange Nejma seeks is unlikely; yet she continues to write in hope of a “one day”.

**“secure the harmony of culture”**

Bella - Yaffa

Tammuz’s Bella-Yaffa, like Pnina-Mazal, is fascinated by Arabic and Hebrew languages and their evolution. It is this fascination that drives her to work with her former professor, Dr. Bieberkraut, to create a dictionary that chronicles the origins and original meaning of words. She would spend hours asking the Palestinian she hired to care for her home to tell her the Arabic names of things. Bella-Yaffa and professor Bieberkraut spend years compiling the dictionary, and yet Tammuz tells us they were unable to move beyond the letter B.

Frustrated and feeling the mental strain of the project, she seeks solace in the garden, where she finds the gardener pulling weeds. As she had in the past Bella-Yaffa approaches him, pointing to the weeds he is pulling, she asks him what they are called in his language, to which he responds what does it matter what they are called, “this weed has been breaking my back for fifty years, and even if it has no name, cursed be it.”<sup>63</sup> Equating this analogy with her own quest to create a unified dictionary, Bella-Yaffa, while the professor is on a walk, collects all the

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<sup>63</sup> Tammuz, Benjamin. *Requiem for na’aman*. Modan Publishers. 1982. Pg 220-221

research and what has been compiled for their dictionary and sets it on fire. The moment she realizes the futility of her desire to unify languages, long separated, she loses her fragile grip on reality.

Using language each of the authors demonstrate Cassirer's theory on the relationship between language, identity, culture and community; illustrating how language serves both to connect and disconnect their characters. Each of the characters are engaged in some measure of a one-sided conversation; they speak not to each other but around, and beyond. This mis-communication illustrated in the novels is one that parallels the conflict as it appears as if Israel and Palestine, like the characters, are able to communicate with the other. Each side wants concessions from the other yet neither is willing to concede themselves. Instead of working within in their set perimeters, with the tools and resources they have Israeli and Palestinian officials have instead chosen to set unrealistic terms such as: "no Israel", "no Palestine". Unlike Hamid who tries in vain to identify his nemesis, governing officials chose to deny and strip away the identity of the other hoping that they will simply fade in to oblivion as an "aberration."

## CHAPTER V

### THEY SAY, I SAY/HE SAYS, SHE SAYS

Authors bring with them their voices, their experiences and understandings of the conflict. If Amos Oz is correct and the conflict is a conflict of “right vs. right,” one that is “confined to this land, between the sea and the desert” and only truly understood by its inhabitants, what are these authors telling us? Are they each in their own way serving to continue to perpetuate this situation or are they in fact representative of how their society views the conflict? What are they saying about the conflict? Are their stories supportive of Oz’s theory or are they providing their readers with another interpretation? This chapter will be broken down into three sections: 1) Introductions: how does the way the authors begin their novels parlay into their message? 2) He Says/She Says: What are the female authors, Zahar and Horn, saying in comparison to their male counterparts, Tammuz and Ghanafani? 3) What do the Israeli authors, Tammuz and Horn, have to say about the conflict in comparison to the Palestinian, Zahar and Ghanafani? What do the differences in interpretation have to teach us?

## **They Say/I Say: Israel and Palestine**

### Introductions

Introductions set the scene. They create lasting first impressions, divulging a little about who we are and where we stand. Introductions serve to begin a storyteller's conversation with their readers. It allows the storyteller to grasp a reader and pull that reader towards the storyteller's understanding. Most often how a person begins a story can tell a lot about the ending. In the following novels, each beginning speaks volumes as to the writer's perspective.

#### **Kanafani (Palestine)**

Kanafani's book, more than any of the other novels, is filled with despair, hate and a burning fury. He begins his story with a sun so hot that it is like a "molten disk" in the sky. Interestingly enough Kanafani's novel is the only novel, of the four, to begin in the day the others begin at night or in the pre-dawn. The scene provides the reader with the ability to understand his character Hamid; it helps the reader understand how the sun and its unbearable heat epitomize Hamid's mind-set as he is forced to give away his "dishonored" younger sister in marriage to not only her defiler, but his arch-nemesis.

Hamid devotes more than the first half of his story to the disorder of his household, his familial relationships, his dead father, his mother's

abandonment, his dying aunt that he cared for, and his sister, Maryam. Hamid focuses mostly on his sister and the dishonor she brought to his household and to herself; he blames Maryam's defilement on not only her inability to control herself, or Zakaria seducing her, but on his failings as her provider and protector. Not until the end of his story does he encounter *outside forces*.

### **Tammuz (Israel)**

Tammuz's story begins with a key character committing suicide in the predawn hours of morning. Bella - Yaffa rides out into the barren desert, finds a quiet spot on the side of a mountain, and as the sun is rising drinks a poison. The reader is immediately taken in by her struggle as she contemplates what she is doing, the one sided conversation she has with her husband Ephraim, explaining to him the reason why she decided to commit suicide, and her regret knowing that she would be leaving behind a void of unknown.

Tammuz begins his book not through his characters like Kanafani, Horn or Zahar. Instead he begins with a prologue on suicide. He prefaces for the reader the difference between a fortunate and an unfortunate suicide. According to Tammuz the fortunate leave a note, an explanation; while the unfortunate, like his character Bella-Yaffa's, do not. He tells us that the uncertainty left by an unfortunate suicide denies the ones left

behind a “link connecting the living and the dead”<sup>64</sup>. The only witnesses to Bella-Yaffa’s final moments and her explanation are the desert and the reader.

### **Horn (Israel)**

Horn, like Kanafani and Tammuz, begins her story with violence; however her introduction is done in such a way that her readers feel as if they are listening to Tchaikovsky’s 1812 overture. The reader is first introduced to Horn’s primary character and narrator, Amal, as she recounts the moment of her birth: “I was born to the salvos of the Jordanian canons.” Welcoming her was her grandmother, her great-grandmother and her great-grandmother’s British/American lover Edward; Amal tells us that “no man,” meaning no father, was there to hear the news of her birth. <sup>65</sup>

Like Kanafani and Tammuz, Amal and the reader spend more than half of the novel “discovering” her family. Unlike Kanafani’s Hamid, who encounters his *outside force* with anger and hatred, or Tammuz’s Ephraim or Bella - Yaffa who encounter their *outside force* with ambivalence, Amal’s, and Horn’s introduction of the readers to her

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<sup>64</sup> Tammuz, Benjamin. Requiem for Na’amm. Pg 1

<sup>65</sup> Horn, Shifra. Four mothers. St. Martins Press. NY 1996. Pg 1



outside forces are as pleasant as they are violent. Our introduction to her outside forces is as if we were being introduced to her extended family.

### **Zahar (Palestine)**

Zahar begins with her story with “grey winter light” in a city of the dead. Zahar begins her story, not with her main character, but with a mysterious foreigner, a scholar. Rayya’s story is relayed to the reader through the voice of her diary as it is read by Mr. Foster, an American scholar who discovers her and her lover’s diaries and letters that she had hidden in a closet of a rest station in Petra. Unlike the other novels’ characters, the reader knows Zahar’s main character, Rayya, only through Foster’s interpretation of her, through his translation of her diaries and letters. As Foster journeys to find her, the reader not only learns about Rayya and her lover Alex but of Palestine.

### **She Says/He Says**

Each of the authors’ approach to the conflict are as similar as they are dissimilar. Their methods and means of getting to their message may be different, but the message itself is very much the same. This is broken and not until we have fixed ourselves can we sufficiently address each other. Each of the pivotal characters struggled to discover who they are, their place in society; their identity.

The male authors, Kanafani and Tammuz, through their male characters (Hamid and Ephraim), appear to question not only who they are, or their purpose, but their authority. Both Hamid and Ephraim struggle to assert their authoritative voice only to realize that they have lost of control over their household. With his mother's abandonment and sister's dishonor, the women in Hamid's life challenge everything he knows and believes to be the normative, knocking him off-balance until he flees into the desert finding himself, full of rage, face to face with his enemy in the dark.

Ephraim, like Hamid, struggles to maintain his authority, his role as unchallenged head of household. Despite his best attempts to lead, guide and control his household he loses his beloved Bella-Yaffa, who is unable to identify with Palestine/Israel, kills herself. Their son Na'aman unable to identify with the outside world commits suicide, their daughter Sarah, ready to challenge his every order, marries her stepbrother whom she had seduced, his grandson Oved marries a Sephardic Jew and his great-granddaughter goes insane trying to link the past with the present. In the end both houses (Hamid's and Ephraim's) are in complete disarray, no true structure, no one truly listening; much like how the governments of Israel and Palestine do not understand, listen to, or respect the voices of those inside or outside.

The approach by the female authors, Horn and Zahar, is quite different from their male counterparts. For them the focus is on the women and their mistreatment by the men in their lives. Horn's book centers almost exclusively around a family of women each cursed to be abandoned by the men in their life and forced to fend for themselves and their children. Interestingly enough Horn is the only author to include her other voice (Palestine) in the same situation as her characters drawing a sort of parallel. The relationship between the two single mothers, Pina-Mazal (Israel) and her wet nurse Fatima (Palestine) and their children Guella (Israel) and Muhammad (Palestine) as "brother and sister" in Fatima's milk the children and mothers linked symbolically to the same bosom.

While her counterpart Horn, as well as her male counterparts Kanafani and Tummuz, take great pains in cultivating the connection between the reader and their characters, for Zahar the connection between the reader and her character, Rayya, is not as important as telling *Rayya's* story; Zahar informs the reader of this fact from the very beginning as she announces to the reader that "All characters in this book are fictitious, Only Palestine is real". Like Horn, Zahar's character is betrayed by the man she loves, who turns out to be a spy for the British and whom in the end she ends up killing.

## **They Say**

Interestingly, the beginnings of each of the four novels deal with family, death and violence. Three novels, *All that is Left to You*, *Requiem for Na'aman* and *Four Mothers* are well underway or almost to their zenith before any of the authors mention *outside forces* (Israel/Palestine) only one novel, *Beggar at Damascus Gate*, begins with an outside voice. At first read I saw only the conflict as trivial, white noise that both sides had simply come to understand and accept as permanent everyday fixtures in their lives; each novel echoing a similar “it is what it is” stance on the conflict. However when each author is placed in comparison to the other Palestinian and Israeli, male and female, one can see that the author is anything but ambivalent on the subject in fact it consumes their lives it has become as much a part of who they are as their cultural identity.

When one steps back and reviews what has been laid before him, can they realize the merit of Amos Oz’s argument that only those intimately involved can ever truly understand the conflict? In addition, I would go one step further and argue that each of the four novels assert that in order for there to be a true understanding, each side, Palestine and Israel, need first to organize their own house. Yet this conflict by its very nature does not afford either side the ability to do just that. Each

author argues that a solution cannot be utilized until order and structure has been established and more importantly adequately enforced. For each of us long to provide a better place for our children than we had, we strive with good intentions to be able to “in my children ... make up for being the child of my fathers-and to all the future, for *this* [emphasis in the original] today”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The portable Nietzsche. Thus spoke Zarathustra: second part. Pg 233. Kaufman, Walter. Penguin Books. 1976

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OUTSIDE WORLD, INSIDE

This chapter will compare the way in which the outside world, Non-Palestinian and Non- Israeli, portrays the conflict in comparison to how the inside world, Palestinian and Israeli, portrays it. For the purpose of this chapter Ghassan Kanafani's *All That's Left to You* and Shifra Horn's *Four Mothers* were selected to be the voices of the inside world and J.M.G. Le Clézio's *Wandering Star* will serve as the outside world's voice. More specifically this chapter will focus primarily on the how the authors portray their beliefs through their protagonists; Kanafani's Hamid (inside - Palestine); to Le Clézio's Nejma (outside - Palestine); Horn's Amal (inside - Israel); and Le Clézio's Esther (outside -Israel).

"Every man must define his identity against his mother. If he does not, he just falls back into her and is swallowed up."<sup>67</sup>

#### **Authors' Symbolic Representation**

If we were to look beyond Salon columnist Camille Paglia's intended meaning, this quote provides us with the basic concept of the struggle Hamid, Nejma, Esther and Amal each endure to define and

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<sup>67</sup> Camille Paglia. Camille Paglia. [http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/camille\\_paglia](http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/camille_paglia)

protect a little piece of their own Palestine. “Every man must define his identity against his mother.”<sup>68</sup> As social beings, we have an innate desire to identify with others but most importantly to our mothers and fathers. As children we tend to emulate our parent(s). They are the complex ruler, by which we measure ourselves.

### Hamid and Nejma

Le Clézio’s Nejma (outside- Palestine), and Kanafani’s Hamid (inside- Palestine) each yearn to identify with their adopted mothers, their biological mothers and their *motherland*, Palestine. Throughout our brief time with Hamid, he struggles with feelings of overwhelming abandonment. Not only had his father died, but his mother left shortly thereafter, leaving Hamid with only memories by which to measure himself. He feels forsaken, without direction or a true sense of home and identity. It is as if Palestine has somehow ceased to exist while he slept. Hamid abandons all he knows in an attempt to reconnect with the identity he has lost.

Nejma, like Hamid, was an orphaned Palestinian, both having lost their homes to an outside occupying force, Hamid to Zakaria, and Nejma to what will become Israelis. The reader is first introduced to Nejma as she and other Palestinians are forcibly relocated from their homes to a

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<sup>68</sup> Camille Paglia.

refugee camp, a camp where she, and Palestine, are condemned to be forgotten by all except disease and death. Even in the oppressive conditions of the refugee camp, Nejma fights to maintain her identity. She, like Hamid, clings to memories. However, unlike Hamid who wishes death to his oppressors, Nejma struggles to find a way to live within her current world without sacrificing who she is.

#### Amal and Esther

Where Nejma struggles to maintain her identity, Horn's Amal (inside-Israel) struggles to "define [her] identity." Born in the summer of 1948 at the height of the 1948 Palestine War/ War of Independence, Amal, an Israeli/Palestinian Jew<sup>69</sup>, struggled to discover her identity and place. Amal begins her story by telling the reader that her mother had yet to recover from the "humiliating experience of giving birth"<sup>70</sup> to her. Despite the fact that Amal is constantly trying to identify with a mother, unable to interact or show affection for her, she claims her journey began the day her friends gave her a book outlining what she calls the "facts of life." From the moment she discovers that every child has a father, Amal's lifelong quest to identify begins as she seeks to uncover who her "unknown" father is. It is not until Amal discovers the truth behind her

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<sup>69</sup> The term Palestinian Jew, is a term which referred to Jews living in Palestine before the creation of Israel. The reason that Israeli is also listed is because Amal's birth coincides with the Labor/birth of the Israeli State.

<sup>70</sup> Horn, Shifra. *Four mothers*. St. Martins Press. NY 1996. Pg 1



conception that the significance of her being born in 1948 becomes apparent to the reader.

Le Clézio begins his book with the image of a young Esther walking hand in hand with her parents; taking great pains to create the early image of an idyllic childhood for Esther, in an attempt to juxtapose the innocence of her childhood against the barbarity of her journey. While at first glance it might appear as if the struggle for identity is not one Esther shares with the others, upon closer inspection it becomes apparent her identity, like herself, is in a form of hiding. This can be seen in the many names she has Esther, Estrella, Estrelitta and Hélène as well as in the fact that she is instructed by her parents to deny her very identity. Of all the characters, it is Esther that is the most developed, yet at the same time she is as empty and lost as Hamid, Nejma and Amal.

“If he does not, he just falls back into her and is swallowed up”

This allegory illustrates what each of our authors’ characters felt was happening to them as they fought to find a way to coalesce their identity with what was becoming; a desperate need to discover their place, their identity for fear of losing all, becoming engulfed by what was.

#### Hamid and Nejma

Nowhere is this image more powerfully portrayed than in the desert scene in Kanafani’s *All That’s Left to You* and the forced evacuation

scene(s)<sup>71</sup> in Le Clézio's *Wandering Star*. Both Hamid and Nejma find a sense of timeless calm in their journeys through the desert, only to discover, once they have emerged from her (the desert, Palestine) that they had been "swallowed up". For on the other side of the desert, with the rising of the sun, death awaits Hamid, and blindness Nejma.

#### Amal and Esther

Amal tells us her birth saw no "man on hand to receive the news", a fact that troubled her growing up, the nature of her birth and her father's identity was a taboo topic, quickly dismissed as unimportant. The fact that the father was "unknown" was not of any consequence to the women raising her as men themselves were almost considered a luxury. Not until the death of her great-grand mother Sarah does she discover her family's curse and eventually the truth regarding her conception and the reason her father was and will forever be "unknown". Amal's quest to uncover her identity leads her to discover one of her mother's oldest friends, who informs her that no one, maybe not even her mother, knows for sure who her father is. He then informs her of the story regarding the Yeshiva students who had gang raped a young person shortly before her mother turns up pregnant. Upon this

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<sup>71</sup> Le Clézio's book chronicles not just Nejma's wandering but Esther's as well.

discovery, Amal appears to come to terms with who she is, accepting that she has to discover who she is absent from her parentage.

Unlike Hamid, Nejma and Amal whose journeys appear to have reached their climax, Esther's appears to be stuck in constant transition. Esther's journey, of all the characters, was the most evolving and devolving as hers doesn't truly end. She is never able to connect or establish roots no matter where she goes; until the end she is still trying to find her identity and place.

### **Inside vs. Outside**

#### Hamid and Nejma

Each author approaches, through their characters, the tenuous Israeli and Palestinian relationship differently. When Kanafani's character Hamid is confronted with the face of Israel (an unnamed, faceless soldier) he wants to destroy it, yet is somehow unable to decide how, slowly and painfully through dehydration or quickly with a knife. For Le Clézio's character Nejma Israel is the book's main character, Esther, a girl her age, who like herself is on a quest to find home. Whereas Hamid plans his Israel's death Nejma seeks to understand and reach out to hers. Even in these differences one can see a similar struggle for identity. Le Clézio's sees sisters, linked by name, destined to travel an eerily similar journey, sharing the same desire to find home and

stop wandering. Kanafani sees an enemy, a stranger in the dark who would as soon take his life as he would have taken theirs.

### Amal and Esther

For Esther it is as if Palestine, and her children, live in the background, only briefly crossing into her life. Her first encounter with Palestine occurs when Esther meets Nejma, as she is being relocated to the camps, twice during the Intifadas the war seeps into her kibbutz, as a mild irritation, when her fiancé and a young boy dies, and at the end of the book when she briefly reflects back on the girl she met on the road.

For Amal, whose name means “labor” or “travail” in Hebrew and “hope” in Arabic, Palestine is as much of her everyday existence as Israel. This connection can be found in the significance of her name, Amal tells us that her mother selected her name because it sounded good in both Hebrew and in Arabic. The reader can easily surmise that her mother Guella, a Jew who had nursed as an infant at the bosom of Palestine, sought to balance her Jewish and Palestinian identity. The name Guella chose for her daughter in and of itself is interesting for in her life as a Jew Guella, knew torture and torment; travail, and yet her life with Palestine contained nurturing, brotherhood, and hope. It is this combination of travail and hope, Palestinian and Israeli, which would be destined to end the family curse of abandonment.

## **View from the Inside, Out**

Hamid (Inside - Palestine)

As similar as they are different these characters are perfect symbolic images of the inside world and the outside world; Eastern (Palestinian and Israeli) interpretation of the conflict and the Western (U.S. and European) interpretation. Kanafani through his character Hamid demonstrates the inside world, in the inside world very few people desire or believe that there could ever be an understanding or peace. While the outside world argues peace can be achieved through accords, negotiations, brokered treaties and mutual understanding<sup>72</sup>, as illustrated through Nejma in Le Clézio's book. In Hamid's world it is Israel who is nameless and faceless, as demonstrated in the final desert scene, while in Nejma's world Israel and Palestine are linked together, they are the same people at different points in a fixed space, who until they develop this understanding are destined to remain stars constantly wandering.

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<sup>72</sup> In his 1967 essay *The Meaning of Homeland* Amos Oz argues that it is a "gross mistake, a common over-simplification, to believe that the dispute [between Israel and Palestine] is based on a misunderstanding. It is based on full and complete understanding: we have repeatedly offered the Arabs goodwill, good neighborliness, and cooperation, but that is not what they wanted from us, They wanted us, according to the most moderate Arab formulation, to abandon the idea of establishing a free Jewish State in the Land of Israel, and that is a concession that we can never make."

Kanafani's short story, *All that's Left to You*, begins with a fury as hot as the "sun's molten disc."<sup>73</sup> Kanafani introduces us to his character Hamid as he is forcibly giving away his dishonored sister Maryam to his archenemy Zakaria, the man who defiled her. It is as if Kanafani is attempted to parallel these three people with Palestinian: Hamid, the Palestine that was; Zakaria, the Palestinian that has gotten in bed with the enemy (Israel); and Maryam the defiled, dishonored Palestine; her child the product of this union. Even the language Kanafani uses to tell this story is like the history between these two entities, violent and full of contemptuous hate, a hate directed not only at Israel but seemingly at Palestine, for allowing herself to be defiled, as Maryam had. What of the unborn baby that began the conflict, one moment a bastard and in another an orphan? Is he the seed of the new Palestine, born of rage and death, or does he represent the orphaned children that are left behind fatherless [or motherless] as parents are killed in freedom/terrorist campaigns, fighting for their independence, like Hamid's father and his best friend Salim, or innocent bystanders in the wrong place at the wrong time?

Nejma (Outside - Palestine) and Esther (Outside - Israel)

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<sup>73</sup> Kanafani, Ghassan. *All that's left to you*. 2004. Pg 1

Le Clézio, in contrast to Kanafani, makes every effort to demonstrate connectiveness between his Israel and his Palestine. Structurally and linguistically Le Clézio's story begins very differently from Kanafani's. While Kanafani's book opens with rage, defilement, and violence, *Wandering Star* opens with the voice and memories of a child. In an attempt to demonstrate this connectiveness between the two women, it is not until after we have formed a connection with and can empathize with Esther's (Israel), plight that we are introduced to Nejma (Palestine). Nejma and Esther, two stars unable to occupy the same point in space, as Esther's journey begins to come to what would be its end, its existence in that space pushes out the existing star, Nejma, forcing her to begin her own duplication of Esther's wandering journey. The first step in any union of peoples, be it marriage or coexistence, is the development of understanding, Nejma from the moment of their brief encounter desires to communicate with Esther and tell her about her life and her experiences. She writes faithfully in her journal of the camp, her life and her experiences as if she were having a conversation with Esther, with Israel. Despite this attempt to demonstrate similarity between his two characters Le Clézio, in the end, fails to fully accomplish this. Despite his intent Le Clézio's approach to the development of his characters tends to promote a stronger connection with Esther than for

Nejma who feels almost as an afterthought and all but disappears from the story.

### Amal (Inside - Israel)

Horn's Book opens with the birth of Amal in the summer of 1948 to the "[s]alvos from the Jordanian cannons [which] saluted the dramatic event [of her birth] with suitable noises in the background. Shells ... seeking the addresses of those with whom destiny had made a bloody appointment. On that day I joined my voice to theirs"<sup>74</sup> Horn combines both the heat and fury of Kanafani and the image of beauty and innocence of Le Clézio. Throughout Amal's journey she is constantly confronted with the duality of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. Her grandmother Pina-Mazal, after her husband, a Yeshiva student, was arrested by Turkish occupying forces, found work with the conquering British army as a translator causing her to entrust her only child to the care of a Palestinian woman. Amal's mother, a communist, was raped by Yeshiva students during a Purim<sup>75</sup> festival, became an advocate who defended "the underdogs, especially the Arabs"<sup>76</sup> and Amal, the product

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<sup>74</sup> Horn, Shifra. *Four mothers*. St. Martins Press. NY 1996. Pg 1

<sup>75</sup> Purim is considered to be the most festive of all Jewish Holidays. It celebrates Esther and how she saved Persian Jews from being exterminated by a plot hatched by Haman. The festival is very loud, the book of Esther is traditionally read and upon saying Haman's name listeners are supposed to scream or make noise to block out the power of his name. This is the one time where Yeshiva students are permitted to drink to the point of intoxication.

<sup>76</sup> Horn, Shifra. *Four mothers*. St. Martins Press. NY 1996. Pg 20



of that rape, born from violence into violence is destined to be the one who ends the curse on the women of her family.

### Hamid and Nejma

Another difference between the three books is the time of day when the characters' journey begins. For Hamid his journey begins in the dark where he is visible to no one other than the desert herself while Nejma's began in daylight. What significance does the difference in the time of day have on the story? Could this once again be a demonstration of inside vs. outside view? Is the cloak of darkness which Hamid uses to make an escape Kalafani's way of saying that the world is still blind and ignorant to what is happening to Palestine and the light that dawns on Hamid as he is about to kill his Israeli captive a way of accusing the world of seeing Palestine as the aggressors and Israel as the victims? If stars are only visible at night then why is there so much sun in Le Clézio's *Wandering Star*? Is Le Clézio's message in fact not all that different from Kalafani's? Is he arguing that we in fact are aware that what's happened, and continues to happen, does so in broad daylight; the concentration camps, the mass executions, the holocaust of WWII, the Stila refugee camps, the wall, the Israeli prisons, the uprisings and

bombings, and yet we still chose to ignore it all and live within our six inch protected bubble?

### Amal and Esther

Esther, like Hamid begins her journey at night; however unlike Hamid her journey is through lush woods. Where Hamid is in search of his mother, Esther is accompanied by hers. Where he is alone, engulfed by the desert and abandoned by time, she is surrounded by people, customs and languages she doesn't know; people as similar to her as they are different. Although Esther's arrival in Palestine, in search of a place to call home, displaces Nejma from hers, Esther's journey does not end there; instead Esther's journey ends with her, like Nejma, unsettled and without a home.

Amal's journey, unlike Hamid, Nejma and Esther's leads her not through harsh unwelcoming lands, but instead, a harsh and unwelcoming past; a past full of disappointments, abandonment, anger, war and rape. During her quest to discover her identity, Amal uncovers she is the culmination of her mother, and the women who came before her. It is with the birth of her son that Amal is able to bring an end to the curse allowing her, of all the characters, to successfully emerge from her mother.

### **Characteristics of Mother**

Mothers, as an almost accepted stereotype, serve to provide their children with structure, roots, spiritual and moral guidance, they nurture the intellectual curiosity of their child[ren], their growth. Most importantly they provide and cultivate the seed of their child's identity. Poet Adrienne Rich a mother "exemplifies in one person religion, social conscience, and nationalism. Institutional motherhood revives and renews all other institutions."<sup>77</sup> In each of the novels the character of mother plays one of the most interregal roles in each of the main characters lives.

#### *All that's Left to You*

Kanafani symbolically links the identity of Hamid's mother to Palestine, without her Palestine lacks all that makes it Palestine; traditions, morals, culture. For Hamid, his mother's abandonment is very symbolic of the loss of self. Without a mother to nurture her development Hamid's younger sister, Maryam, (Palestine), becomes a victim of seduction, fails, falling into ruins, becoming a dishonored nation of orphans; with no identity and her son, Hamid, now homeless, is left to wonder the desert alone without direction, purpose or identity.

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<sup>77</sup> Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. W. W. Norton & Company. 1995

### *Wandering Star*

Esther, unlike the other characters, has both parents until she is in her late teens when her father is killed. She doesn't have a relationship with her mother as her mother is simply there and this parlay into her constant search for her identity, who she is, her exile, and her having to constantly change names. It is not until the end when her mother is dying that her journey comes full circle and she discovers her identity. As for Nejma we are told nothing of her mother she like many other refugees is an orphan, whose identity exists primarily in the pages of her diary.

### *Four Mothers*

Shifra Horn's novel is one of the two novels where the mother character remains present. The novel centers on the maternal line and how they have been destined to be abandoned not as children, like the characters in Khanafani, Tammuz or Zhad's novels, but by their husbands/fathers. Each of the five women, beautiful and strong willed, are destined to be abandoned by their spouses as soon as they become pregnant or give birth. In this novel, unlike the others, it is the father who is absent from the child's life. Only one character, Sarah, maintains a lasting relationship with a man; Edward. Edward, the only male

character who stays with his beloved until his death, is a married man with whom Sarah has an affair and a child who dies in a plague.

Interestingly, Horn, unlike the other authors uses her male characters and not her female characters to symbolize the incomplete relationship between Israelis, Palestinians and the government(s). While the mother/women, or their identity, remained with them the people, exiled, were doomed to be left or abandoned, by greed, lust, war or violence, their spouse/father. It is only the forbidden relationship between Sarah and Edward that remained intact, and the fact that Edward was an American says a lot as to the state of past and current political alliances. Writer Amos Oz once commented that if the Arabs blamed Israel for an earthquake that the UN would vote for sanctions against Israel “America would veto and France and Britain would abstain”.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/jan-june02/oz\\_1-23.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june02/oz_1-23.html)

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

History is full of stories of the once oppressed becoming the oppressors, nowhere is it more poignantly heartbreaking than in the current Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Le Clézio's *Wandering Star* does a wonderful job in demonstrating the irony that is Israel and Palestine all while maintaining a certain kind of quasi-neutrality. In his story Le Clézio lines up the paths of his wandering stars Nejma and Esther so that the reader cannot help but to notice the similarity of their journeys, feeling empathy for both Nejma (Palestine) and Esther (Israel). Whereas Le Clézio's *Wandering Star* may invoke sympathy from the reader for both parties, Kanafani's *All That's Left To You* and Zahar's *Beggar at Damascus Gate* do an equally impressive job in illustrating the feeling of hopelessness and anger felt by Palestinians. The anger and exacerbation drives Hamid to cross the hostile desert at night with no weapons in a desperate search for his lost identity. While Rayya struggles to find who she is, she finds herself, like Palestine, betrayed by the ones who claimed to only want what's best for her: she becomes a beggar in her own home.

Horn's *Four Mothers* like Le Clézio's *Wandering Star* attempts to demonstrate the shared journey of Palestinians and Israelis by chronicling the hardships experienced when the country co-existed, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of the British mandate to the Zionist rape of Palestine and the creation of Israel. While Tammuz focuses on the destruction of his own home, questioning as it falls apart, rather or not things would have been different if only "this" had happened.

### **Discussion**

In 1897, two Rabbis were sent to what was then Palestine to determine if it was a suitable place in which to establish a Jewish settlement or "homeland." The two visiting rabbis determined Palestine to be a "bride, beautiful, but married to another man."<sup>79</sup> These two stories serve to demonstrate that the problem of the "other man has yet to be resolved."<sup>80</sup> A problem according to Karmi Ghada, Research Fellow, Professor of Arab Studies and Author, that will never be solved provided Israel's primary concern remains not with "peaceful co-existence but

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<sup>79</sup> Ghada, Karmi. Married to another man. Israel's dilemma in Palestine.

<sup>80</sup> Ghada, Karmi. Married to another man. Israel's dilemma in Palestine

about colonialism and an exclusivist ideology”<sup>81</sup> that is “imposed and maintained by force.”<sup>82</sup>

The authors even utilize the titles of the books to help further tell their story: *All That's Left To You* denotes that the only thing left to you once your identity, future and hope have been taken from you, is despair, anger, hate and nothingness. Like Hamid you are destined to be “thrown into [a] dark abyss, tortured and wounded, deprived of even a word.”<sup>83</sup> While the title of Le Clezio’s novel *Wandering Star* is a play on an actual term coined to describe the Jewry displaced during and after WWII. Those wandering looking for a place to call home, the stars denoting the Star of David stitched on their clothing and their very Jewishness. The fact that they are “stars” means that they cannot physically occupy the same space as another star. The title of Tammuz’s novel *Requiem for Na’aman* literally means “a mass for the death of my pleasantness or beauty”, and throughout this novel the main character Ephraim seems to suffer one loss after another yet holds firm in his belief or desire for Israel. Zahar’s title, *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*, serves to show the similarity between Rayya and Alex and between Palestine and Britain their relationship was fraught with betrayal and unfulfilled

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<sup>81</sup> Ghada, Karmi. Married to another man. Israel’s dilemma in Palestine

<sup>82</sup> Ghada, Karmi. Married to another man. Israel’s dilemma in Palestine

<sup>83</sup> Kanafani, Ghassan. All that’s left to you. 2004. Pg 1



promises, leaving both Rayya and Palestine as beggars in their ancestral home. Finally Horn's title *Four Mothers* shows the incompleteness of the home and Israel as it lacks structure and identify.

Each of the main characters discussed in this research, Hamid, Matzal, Amal, Rayya, Nejma, Ephraim, Bella – Yaffa, and Estrealla share a common traumatic childhood; each of them having lost a parent or both parents to violent means. They struggle to establish roots: some are homeless, and others are not, but all of the characters are outliers, connected spiritually to Palestine/Israel, but not politically.

### **Conclusion**

For all their qualities, none of the books attempts to overtly offer any possible solution for the problem. Le Clézio demonstrates the cyclical nature of the conflict, yet he doesn't really venture to offer a solution. Instead we meet Esther at the end of the book jumping back across the water. Nejma just vanishes; we last see her as she emerges half blind from the desert. While Zahar's Rayya is unwilling to concede her fate, she is left to pose as a beggar at the door to her home, invisible to all but those who look for her. Tammuz's Evphraim is so sure of his choice to stay and create Israel that he is willing to accept any loss of happiness, while his wife Bella – Yaffa is so unhappy in her barren Israel that she chooses to kill herself. The two who have the most diametrically different

views are Horn and Kanafani. Horn sees connections, a potential unity, a situation where one survival is interlinked and dependant on the others. Kanafani's novella, on the other hand, is so consumed with the sense of despair and anger that not one of his stories has any measurable sense of hope that one would need in order to propose a solution. For him the solution is death to Israel even if it means destruction in the process.

This view forces us, as readers, to consider two options. One: there is no hope for the current situation. Eventually the fighting will end when there is no one else left with the will or ability to fight; or two: the only solution is the forced transplantation of one of the groups, as the two cannot occupy the same area. If one were to compare how the inside portrays the conflict against how the outside portrays it, one can see the simplistic view, shared stories that the outside voice (Le Clezio) seems to speak with while the inside voice is full of heat, complexities and barriers. However if we compare the voices of those inside (Kanafani, Zahr, Tammuz and Horn), each very subtly through the structure and form provides their philosophy all of which seem to speak in unison: if we are to ever properly address the conflict between our two houses we must fix our own home.

Author Amos Oz argues that the only people who can truly understand the conflict are those directly involved, Palestinians and

Israelis. This truth is illustrated by the fact that when many outsiders see the conflict as being between Palestine and Israel, they fail to see or appreciate the underlying tribal allegiances and their subtle nuisances. However I assert that if we employ Cassirer's theory and utilize these novels as a gateway linking us, the reader, to the philosophy of the writer and their philosophy of the conflict, we can see how literature could grant its readers insight into the mind of the writer as well as into the subject he/she is writing on. Their own experiences becoming part of their story. Allowing the writer to obtain "self-knowledge," an *identity*, and therein by creating a portal, linking their world with the others. Through this literary portal the reader can better understand the connections between life, culture, religion, philosophy, and politics and how these connections can be utilized in the promotion of understanding thereby allowing the reader to identify with their cause.

Amos Oz argues in his essay *The Meaning of Homeland* that the conflict is an internal one, "confined to this land, between the sea and the desert." It is a conflict that can truly be understood by only those intimately involved [Palestine and Israel], a conflict of "right against right,"<sup>84</sup> a conflict that is destined to continue until the concept that "to

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<sup>84</sup> Oz, Amos Under this blazing light: essays. 1979. Cambridge. Pg 93

be a free people in our own land' is a right that is valid either universally or not at all" is understood by both parties, Palestine and Israel.<sup>85</sup>

Alas, where shall I climb now with my longing? From all mountains  
I look out for fatherlands and motherlands. But home I found  
nowhere; a fugitive am I in all cities and a departure at all gates.  
Strange and mockery to me are the men of today to whom my  
heart recently drew me; and I am driven out of fatherlands and  
motherlands. Thus I now love only my *children's land* [emphasis in  
the original], yet undiscovered..."<sup>86</sup>

The conflict is one of many variables. It has within it many subtle nuisances that transcend the simple analogy of "right vs right"; it is also a conflict of "wrong vs wrong," a conflict of "family vs family," a conflict which has begun to resemble a childish game of tit for tat, and it is one, that has transcended the borders of the "land, between the sea and the desert" capturing and at times holding the entire world hostage. This conflict is one that has been permitted to evolve into a tangled, twisted, and convoluted mess which often resembles a posturing competition between governments. That notwithstanding it is not the purpose of this research to decide who is in the "right" and who is in the "wrong," nor is

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<sup>85</sup> Oz, Amos Under this blazing light: essays. 1979. Cambridge. Pg 93

<sup>86</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The portable Nietzsche. Thus spoke Zarathustra: second part. Pg 233. Kaufman, Walter. Penguin Books. 1976

its purpose to discover an amenable solution. The purpose is to illustrate the connection between literature, philosophy and politics, to discover the portal, which links them. It is through this portal that literature allows its reader to tease out the knots of philosophy and politics allowing the voices and identities of the people to be heard and discovered; which in turn allows the reader to transcend the politics and the posturing of self-serving politicians and see not Jew and Arab but people struggling to claim their home.

One of the best analogies I have read in the research of this topic came from Amos Oz. In a 2002 interview promoting his novel *Of the Same Sea*, he was asked to provide a sort of explanation of how he would portray the conflict and its leaders as literary characters. He answered that the two sides were like “two children of same cruel parent” who saw in the other “the image of the cruel parent or the image of their past oppressor.”<sup>87</sup> Both sides swearing that they will never repeat the mistakes of their parent; swearing they be different, better, only to find themselves walking in their footprints. The similarities between the two groups, as represented in Le Clezio’s novel, is eerie and one that speak volumes to the argument when we don’t learn from history we are doomed to repeat it, each time with more cataclysmic results. One

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<sup>87</sup> [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/jan-june02/oz\\_1-23.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june02/oz_1-23.html)

cannot escape the similarities between what happened in Warsaw and what is now happening in Palestine.

So what are each of these authors telling us the reader and their political leaders? What is the correlation between literature, people and politics? Shifra Horn was quoted once as saying that her novels were not political, that they were stories whose themes concerned women, and anyone desiring a “normal” life. Yet despite this she was aware that a person who “deals in words has a special responsibility”, a responsibility to help open dialogues between the reader and him/herself; the reader and their community; and the reader and their leaders. By allegorically representing their culture, by holding up a literary mirror reflecting back to their reader a satirical glimpse into their identity, authors help to connect culture with identity, identity with the “community of men.” Literature helps to plug the hole of miscommunication, providing the gateway, which links the “community of men.”

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## Appendix A

### 1922 Map of British Controlled Palestine-Transjordan



Appendix B  
Character Synopsis

## ***All that's Left to You***

### **Characters**

#### **Hamid**

Hamid is a young Palestinian man whose father was killed when Hamid was a child. Shortly after his father's death, his mother flees to Lebanon, abandoning Hamid and his sister. This abandonment forced him to care for his sister and his aging aunt. Hamid, disgraced by his unmarried sister's pregnancy and relationship with his nemesis Zakaria, abandons his home and his sister to Zakaria's licentious care and flees across the desert at night in hopes of finding his mother in Lebanon.

#### **Zakaria**

Zakaria is Hamid antithesis. According to Hamid, Zakaria is a pig, a man with little morals, who is willing to sell a friend, family or comrade out in exchange for favor. He seduces Maryam, Hamid's sister, getting her pregnant. He moves into Hamid and Maryam's home to assume his role of husband, while a few streets over his first wife, to whom he is still married, is left to raise their children.

#### **Maryam**

Maryam is Hamid's younger sister and responsibility since the two were orphaned as teenagers. Behind Hamid's back, Maryam, his

unmarried sister, begins a sexual relationship with his married enemy, Zakaria, a relationship which brings not only dishonor to the family but also leads to her pregnancy, subsequent marriage to Zakaria, and eventually to his death at her hand.

### **The Desert**

Kanafani employs the desert to serve a symbolic role of a watcher. Representative of the land, in particular Palestine, the desert tries to speak to all she has seen and in the end bears witness to Hamid's life and his death.

### ***Requiem For Na'aman***

#### Characters

#### **Bella - Yaffa (Wife of Ephraim)**

The novel begins with Bella - Yaffa planning and executing her suicide. Little is known about Bella - Yaffa except for her unhappiness. Her death occurs within the first two pages, and yet her presence is felt throughout the novel. The reader knows little about her other than she was from a small village in Russia, that's he came to Palestine as a young wife, and that she was beautiful.

#### **Ephraim**

The patriarch of the family, Ephraim, originally from Russia, was among the first of the European Jews to settle in Palestine. Ephraim is

the President of the Citrus Growers Association, a position that affords him with the opportunity to interact with high ranking members of the European Judaic community. His first wife, Bella – Yaffa, depressed by her surroundings and the barrenness that is Palestine, rides off one morning and commits suicide on the side of a mountain; her abandonment haunts Ephraim, who almost to the end of his life is convinced she had simply run away, returning home to Russia.

### **Rivka**

A minor character Rivka, a recent widow, is Ephraim's second wife whom he marries, shortly after the disappearance of his first wife Bella-Yaffa, for the practical purpose of joining her adjacent orange farm with his.

### **Na'aman**

Na'aman is Ephraim and Bella-Yaffa's only son. Na'aman, who looks like his mother and has her melancholy disposition, is a talented musician who leaves Palestine to study music in Paris. Shortly after arriving, he is plagued by images of a woman in water. These images drive him to insanity. Like his mother, he commits suicide.

### **Sara**

Another minor character, Sara, is the daughter of Bella-Yaffa, who seduces and marries her step-brother Aminadav Ben Zion with whom

she opens a textile and later a construction plant. They have two children Elyakum and Oved.

### **Herzl**

The son, and only child, of Ephraim and Rivka, Herzl is named after the famous Jewish Philosopher and Zionist Theodore Herzl. A loner, who was tortured by his older siblings Sarah and Aminadav Ben Zion, Herzl has little patience for his family aside from his great niece and nephew. Considering himself an intellectual, Herzl prefers to speak English and French instead of Hebrew or Yiddish, and helives to discuss philosophy.

### **Bella - Yaffa (Great-Grand Daughter)**

Bella - Yaffa is the great-granddaughter of Bella-Yaffa and Ephraim. She looks like her great-grandmother and like Na'aman shares the same melancholy disposition. Bella – Yaffa writes dark poetry and dreams of a man with flowing blond hair floating in water (Na'aman), she is obsessed with language and the origin of words.

### ***Beggar at Damascus Gate***

#### Characters

### **Rayya**

Rayya is a Palestnian woman in the 1970's Palestian, her story begins with the chance discovery of her journal by an archeologist, Mr.



Foster. The book interweaves Rayya's and Alex's story in with the Mr. Foster's quest to discover who she is. Like many of the characters Rayya struggles to discover her identity, to validate her heritage (Palestine) with the world in which she was raised and knows (western). For Rayya her connection to Palestine is the Arabic language, which she discovers she speaks with a western accent.

### **Alex**

Alex is Rayya's British lover, who the reader later discovers is a British agent investigating Palestinian rights groups as well as Rayya's connection to them. The reader is slowly introduced to Alex through his and Rayya's journals which chronicle their relationship and his death.

### **Mr. Foster**

Mr. Foster is an American archeologist who had been raised in Lebanon. While visiting Petra ,in the off season, Mr. Foster discovers the diaries and the letters exchanged by Rayya and her British lover Alex. Intrigued by their story he attempts to track down Rayya to ask her permission to have the letters and diaries published. He serves as the primary narrator of the story. The story concludes when he finds Rayya disguised as a beggar in Jerusalem.

## ***Four Mothers***

### Characters

#### **Mazal**

Orphaned as a young child Mazal is the matriarch of the family, and it is with Mazal that the curse of abandonment begins. Known for her beauty, the local matchmaker arrives with an offer of marriage from a local merchant, Yitzhak, as soon as Mazal begins her cycle. Shortly after giving birth to her only child, Sarah, her husband takes her to the local Rabbis where he presents her with a “bill of divorcement”<sup>88</sup> and sets off to find his fortune elsewhere. Yitzhak leaves Mazal with half a gold coin and a promise to send her half of his fortune. Shortly after her husband abandons her she begins what appears to be a lesbian relationship with her childhood friend Geula, who moves in and helps her raise Sarah.

#### **Sarah**

The daughter of Mazal and Yitzhak, Sarah, is regarded as the most beautiful woman in the village. Sarah is the first to be allowed to marry for love; she marries Avraham with whom she has a son Yitzhak, who is mentally challenged, and a daughter named Pnina-Mazal. During the course of the novel the reader discovers that the man she ended up marrying was in fact her half-brother. On her return trip to Palestine she

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<sup>88</sup>Horn, Shifra. *Four mothers*. Pg 57

begins a relationship with a married photographer Edward, a relationship that will last until his death.

### **Pnina-Mazal**

Born prematurely, and not expected to live, Pnina-Mazal is the daughter of Sarah and Avraham. Pnina-Mazal is the only member of the family not born in Palestine/Israel. Born with the gift of understanding, Pnina-Mazal has the ability to understand any language she hears. Thanks to this gift she finds employment after WWI working for the occupying British Army in Palestine as a translator.

### **Geula**

Born during the campaign between the Ottoman Empire and Britian, Geula, is the daughter of Pnina-Mazal and David, a Yeshiva student. Born shortly after her father was pressed into service by the Ottoman army, Geula, was nursed by Fatima, a Palestinian woman, while her mother worked for the British as a translator. Geula, with her fiery red hair and sharp teeth, which she was born with, was a devote almost militant communist. She plotted to “plant bombs in the Jewish Agency offices and the British Army headquarters”, wrote propaganda “leaflets calling for an all-Arab revolt against the British occupation and the Jewish imperialism”, and later as an adult worked as an advocate for Palestinian rights.

## **Amal**

Like her mother, Geula, Amal, was born while war raged around them. Unlike the other characters in the novel her father is unknown to the reader and Amal. It is in Amal's quest to discover the identity of her father that she, and the reader, discovers the history of the women of her family, and their curse. It is not until she has come to understand her family and discover their history does she discover her identity and the truth behind her parentage. It is also Amal through the birth of her son who ends the curse.

## **Edward**

Edward's identity like Amal's is unclear. He lives in the American quarter, and at one point sends his wife and daughter "home" to America. Yet, when he first appears in the novel, he is dressed in British khakis and working for General Allenby; nowhere does Horn actually tell the reader Edward's country of origin. The reader is left to assume that he is an American. Our first encounter with Edward is when he asks a young Sarah for permission to take her picture who falls in love with the blue eyed stranger; he reappears several years later on the same ship bringing her back from Europe with her two children. It is on this trip they begin an affair which ends abruptly when he is met at the port by

his wife. Years later they pick up the relationship again and remain faithful to each other until his death.

### ***Wandering Star***

#### Characters

##### **Esther**

Born in France just prior to World War II, Esther, of all the novels' characters, is the only one with a functional, almost idyllic, childhood. Esther, an *Ashkenazi*<sup>89</sup> Jew by birth, was raised in a non-religious household. Having lost her father in a failed attempt to thwart a Nazi campaign, Esther, her mother, along with many other Jews, were forced to march through the mountains in Nazi occupied France to Spain in an attempt to escape the approaching Nazi Army. The book chronicles her childhood in France, her escape and arrival in Israel, her brief life in a Kabutz, and her relocation to Canada, before bringing her full circle to France when her mother dies from cancer.

##### **Nejma**

The reader is introduced to Nejma, Ester's Palestinian counterpart, as she and others are being relocated to settlement camps by the UN after the arrival of European Jews, like Esther. Le Clezio chronicles Nejma's life in the camps, and the lives of the women she shares a

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<sup>89</sup> *Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of European ancestry.*

tent/home, her sudden motherhood with the death of her tent mates, and her journey through the desert in attempt to find freedom. Unlike Esther whose journey we follow until the end Le Clezio only alludes to what becomes of Nejma.