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# Steadfastness, Resistance, and Occupation in the Works of Sahar Khalifeh

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# STEADFASTNESS, RESISTANCE, AND OCCUPATION

# IN THE WORKS OF SAHAR KHALIFEH

الصمود و المقاومة و الاحتلال في مؤلفات صحر خليفه

An Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for Graduation with

Undergraduate Research Honors

Georgia State University

[2011]

by

William Michael Cotter II

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Dr. Nadine Adel Sinno, Honors Thesis Director

_____

Dr. Robert Sattelmeyer, Honors College Director

_____

Date

STEADFASTNESS, RESISTANCE, AND OCCUPATION

IN THE WORKS OF SAHAR KHALIFEH

by

WILLIAM MICHAEL COTTER II

Under the Direction of Nadine Adel Sinno

ABSTRACT

This comparative study offers a close reading of Palestinian author Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring*. The paper focuses on the discussion that the novels explore with regards to the varying methods of resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. I argue that the novels mainly portray two differing modes of resistance: steadfastness, or nonviolent resistance and armed resistance. Additionally, I analyze the critique that Khalifeh provides in her novels of the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank and discuss the mental and emotional repercussions of the occupation on the daily lives of civilians.

INDEX WORDS: Sahar Khalifeh, Post-colonialism, Arabic literature, Occupation, Palestine, Israel, Resistance, Nonviolence, Tension, Palestinian Authority, Political critique, Steadfastness, Sumud

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# IN THE WORKS OF SAHAR KHALIFEH

by

WILLIAM MICHAEL COTTER II

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelors of Interdisciplinary Studies – Middle Eastern Studies

in the College of Arts & Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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WILLIAM MICHAEL COTTER II

Honors Thesis Director: Nadine Adel Sinno

Honors College Director: Dr. Robert Sattelmeyer

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Georgia State University

December 2011

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William Michael Cotter II

2011

# DEDICATION

As the culminating project of my Bachelor's degree, it seems only fitting to me that this project be dedicated to my mother and father. At every stage of my life they have stood beside me in full support of my academic aspirations and placed their trust in my decisions. Without their love and support none of this could have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was first introduced to the writing of Sahar Khalifeh in 2010 by Dr. Nadine Sinno, who used *Wild Thorns* as one of the required texts in her course on modern Arabic literature. In the summer of 2011, I approached Dr. Sinno with the proposal for the study that follows and the request that she act as my advisor. From the initial planning stages of this study, Dr. Sinno has offered me her unconditional support as well as the constructive criticism necessary to guide me in my writing and see the study to its completion. Her willingness and enthusiasm for this project has helped me to develop immensely as both a student and a writer and without her dedication to her students and her work, this study would not have been possible. I am truly honored that she was willing to work with me on this paper, and that she has been by my side as a professor and friend since I first set foot in her intermediate Arabic class in 2009.

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## Preface

During the six months that I spent living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, I was presented with an overwhelmingly complex idea of what resistance meant in the context of Palestine. This idea represented a sharp contrast to the view of resistance presented to me while growing up in the United States. Prior to traveling abroad I had learned in Arabic class that the word صمود "*Sumud*" in Arabic, was literally translated into English as "steadfastness". However, through my time abroad, the word itself came to take on a new, loaded meaning. While sitting in a West Bank classroom, my Palestinian professor began to describe to the class what the concept of *Sumud* meant to her. Standing on the ground in our classroom, she pointed to her feet and began to tell the students that the fact that the university existed, that she existed, that we were in the room, and that she was teaching students the local dialect of Palestinian Arabic in her homeland were all acts of *Sumud*, and resistance. Through personal experiences such as this one, I developed an intense interest in the idea of resistance in the Palestinian context. I wanted to investigate its many meanings and forms, *in context*, and literature – not politics – provided the perfect avenue for that. My research led me to Sahar Khalifeh, whose novels provide much fodder for a discussion on resistance and the inextricable link between art and politics in the Middle East, particularly Palestine.

## Introduction to the Author & Primary Works

### Sahar Khalifeh – صحر خليفه

Born in 1941 in the Northern West Bank city of Nablus, Sahar Khalifeh has become one of the foremost Palestinian authors and feminists in the Arab world. After the defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war against Israel, and in the midst of what Khalifeh describes as a "miserable,

devastating" marriage, Khalifeh began to work on her first novel. After thirteen years of marriage, she severed the relationship in contravention of the norms of both her family and Palestinian society. The Arab defeat in the war of 1967 spurred Khalifeh towards new modes of thinking and creativity which led her greatly towards furthering her writing career as well as causing her to reflect on the society in which she was a part. Of the period Khalifeh writes:

> I could see very clearly that the debacle of 1967 was the fruit of a rotten tree that needed a cure – the internally defeated do not triumph. The cure must start with our households and with those in power, with our social values and ties, with the fabric of the family, with the rules and basics of the upbringing of the individual at home, in school, and at university, and then progress to the street. ("My Life, Myself, and the World" 3)

It was at this point in her life that Khalifeh enrolled, at age 32, in the Department of English at Birzeit University and it was during this period that she completed *As-Subar* [The Cactus] which was translated as *Wild Thorns* [1985]. After leaving Palestine for the United States to complete her graduate studies, Khalifeh returned to her West Bank home of Nablus in 1987 during the first Palestinian intifada. The period during and after the first intifada proved to be one of serious literary production and also personal growth. During this period Khalifeh also founded the Women's Affairs Center which now has branches in Nablus, Gaza, and Amman (LeGassick 1).

In 2008, Khalifeh published *Rabi' Harr* [Hot Spring] which was translated as, *The End of Spring* [2008]. Both *Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring* are set in the city of Nablus, 63km north of Jerusalem. Although the novels share a common setting, the two arose during drastically

different time periods and draw on very different historical realities. *Wild Thorns* is set in the interwar period between 1967 and 1973, while *The End of Spring* is set during the second Palestinian intifada and in particular the 2004 Israeli siege on the compound of Yasser Arafat. Focusing on these two works which tackle different timeframes will allow us to examine some of the ongoing debate on the recurrent but opposing methods of resistance to the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, it gives us the opportunity to contrast views held by Palestinians regarding Arab and Palestinian leadership. Finally, both texts complicate the commonly held views of Palestinian resistance and add depth to our understanding of struggle in the face of colonialism, occupation, or political corruption.

**Wild Thorns** - الصبار

Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* offers a picture of Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Nablus. The novel focuses on the story of the Al-Karmi family, in particular that of Usama, the idealistic Palestinian expatriate who has returned from Kuwait charged with a resistance mission to blow up Israeli busses that carry Palestinian laborers who work in Israeli factories in Tel Aviv. The novel also recounts the story of Usamas' cousin Adil, a Palestinian laborer working in an Israeli factory to provide for his family and support his ailing father. Through the two major characters of the book, *Wild Thorns* provides a realistic and uncompromising view of life under Israeli occupation and the issues facing both Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and abroad.

**The End of Spring** – ربيع حار

*The End of Spring* chronicles the life of a Palestinian family in the village of Ayn Al-Mijran, outside of the city of Nablus. Set during the outset of the second Palestinian Intifada, *The*

*End of Spring* follows Majid, a former singer turned resistance fighter and provides a view of the internal struggle present in the mind of resistance fighters like him; it offers a humanizing view of Palestinian resistance. *The End of Spring* also focuses on Ahmad, Majid's brother, who comes of age during the Intifada and is forced to experience political upheaval, death, and occupation at a young age. The novel predominantly depicts the mental and emotional aspects of occupation and resistance as well as the constantly changing and evolving state of mind experienced by those living under siege. The novel also deals with issues relating to Palestinian leadership, particularly that of the Palestinian Authority and its former leader Yasser Arafat, providing an ambivalent view and social criticism of the "insiders," not just the Israelis.

**Theoretical Framework**

Before providing a textual analysis of Sahar Khalifeh's novels, it is first necessary to discuss the framework through which I plan to analyze these works, namely that of "post-colonialism". The term "postcolonialism" is itself somewhat problematic, especially in the context of Palestine. As Ella Shohat asserts, the term "post-colonial" itself "did not emerge to fill an empty space in the language of political-cultural analysis"; on the contrary, it evolved to take precedent over the paradigm of the "Third World" ("Notes on the Post-Colonial" 100). The term post-colonial and the canon of literature that has developed and grown to comprise the field can appear to denote and demarcate the idea of a specific place or phase in literature as well as that of liberation struggles or national movements. Shohat notes the resistance of some scholars to the use of terms like "neo-colonialism" or "imperialism" in favor of the term "post-colonial" ("Notes on the Post-Colonial" 99). Often the implication is that the idea of post-colonialism situates academia, culture, or society in a place where we have moved past the era of colonial domination of peoples and views post-coloniality in a favorable light. In contrast, neo-colonialism or cultural

imperialism are still loaded with negative connotations that give nod back to the period that the world has been viewed to have left behind.

As Shohat notes, however, it is troubling however to take the idea of post-colonialism as one that marks and end or a fracture from a period of colonial oppression. This point is especially true in the context of Palestine and Palestinian literature. It is important to discuss areas in which the term post-colonialism can be problematic in the context of Palestinian literature and the ever changing situation on the ground in Palestine. Examining post-colonialism as it is situated in this specific socio-political context gives rise to one of the main shortcomings of the term itself. The ever present "post" insinuates an end that, it could be argued, has not yet arrived in the Palestinian context. Although none of the major post-colonial theorists would argue that the "post" prefix truly implies an end, but merely nods to the notion of a shift in time, it is especially tricky to use without qualification in the context of Palestine. Let me elaborate. From the time of the first print of Khalifehs *Wild Thorns* in 1976 to the publishing of *The End of Spring* in 2008, Palestine has been struggling to reach the point in its history where colonialism is behind it. Today, in the year of 2011, if one were to walk the streets of Nablus in which both of Khalifeh's novels are set, it would be challenging to deny that a form colonialism is still visible, if not in its more traditional form then in that of "neo-colonialism" or simply military occupation. When examining works by Palestinian authors, it is essential to keep these facts in the forefront of the readers' mind. For the Palestinian, it could be argued that "post-colonialism" means checkpoints, road blocks, closures, curfews, arbitrary arrest, night raids, lack of political representation, and military occupation. This is the challenge of situating Palestinian literary works in a post-colonial framework without qualifying the term.

Rather than implying an absolute break from the past, I plan to use the term "post-colonialism" to denote a continuation of colonialism, an evolution of its initial forms, and an extension to it. The term "postcolonial" itself may be problematic, but it is important to acknowledge that the wealth of literature labeled as "post-colonial" has helped create cross-cultural understanding. The evolution in this field contributes to deconstructing the orientalist discourse (especially in the case of Palestine) that Edward Said references in his book, including the idea that "the Arab is conceived of now as a shadow" (that dogs the Jew)" (*Orientalism* 286). Postcolonial Arabic literature generally and Palestinian literature specifically provide a counter narrative in which Arabs, Muslims, or other seemingly marginalized groups are not solely viewed in the manner that Said mentions. Additionally, Said also notes that "One of the striking aspects of the new American social-science attention to the Orient is its singular avoidance of literature" (*Orientalism* 291). Khalifeh's novels, and the recent surge in translation of Arabic novels into other languages, work to deconstruct the Orientalist views and are contributing to the potential shift in the manner in which these different groups are viewed. In this sense the term postcolonial -- and the literature that makes up that canon -- continue to be extremely beneficial in spreading knowledge and cross cultural understanding as well as providing a basis for an analysis of texts arising out of conditions of struggles, albeit ongoing struggles.

**Organization**

Providing a close reading of *Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring*, I examine three of the major themes presented throughout both novels, namely: steadfastness, political critique, and the effects of life under occupation. Through this comparative analysis it is possible to see the areas in which these novels converge as well as identify areas in which they complicate common assumptions (or misconceptions) regarding the nature of resistance, politics, literature, or history

itself. Furthermore, the analysis aims to highlight underlying areas of tension present in Khalifeh's novels as well as the mental and emotional strain that life under military occupation places on individuals.

**Methods of Resistance** - اساليب المقاومة

It is difficult to think of the conflict in the holy land without an opinion on the forms and nature of this resistance. Because of the media's conditioning in western societies, many automatically think of armed (violent) resistance whenever the word "resistance" is mentioned. *(Popular Resistance in Palestine* 2*)*

> Muqawama Sha'biya – المقاومة الشعبية, a term commonly used in Palestine, is roughly translated as Popular Resistance. The world sha'biya has its roots in sha'b - الشعب (people) and is understood by Palestinians to refer to the kinds of resistance practiced by large numbers of the population, as opposed to more narrow armed resistance (muqawama musallaha - المقاومة المسلحة) *(Popular Resistance in Palestine* 11*)*

Through the two main characters in Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns*, Usama and Adil, we are offered two opposing viewpoints which work in concert to invoke an intriguing discussion on the modes of resistance to a colonial occupation. Additionally, Khalifeh's portrayal of various modes of resistance in *Wild Thorns* echoes writers like Frantz Fanon who asserts that the revolution represents "the social struggle of the masses, supported by armed actions" (*A Dying Colonialism* 5). This portrayal illuminates the notion that the struggle for liberation encompasses all sectors of society and requires a vast array of methods to achieve the overarching goal. Khalifeh presents Usama as an idealistic Palestinian expatriate who was trained abroad in Kuwait as a resistance

fighter and has returned to the West Bank to carry out armed attacks on Israeli buses that are carrying Palestinian workers into Israel. In addition, Khalifeh presents Usama's cousin Adil as a pragmatist who works in an Israeli factory in an effort to fulfill his duties to his family, including his ailing father who is confined to a dialysis machine.

From the outset of the novel, Usama is portrayed as a former romantic turned revolutionary. When crossing into the West Bank from Jordan, Usama reflects, "My love and yearning for the very earth of this green land of mine, so blessed and so filled with goodness. A romantic, right? No way! Not since the training, the shooting, the crawling on all fours; such things make a man unromantic in thought and deed" (*Wild Thorns* 9). Even though Usama attempts to distance himself from his former romanticism, it is still something that he returns to and struggles with throughout the novel. Usama's revolutionary idealism is compounded with a level of disdain when he reaches the Allenby Bridge border terminal, an experience familiar to so many Palestinians attempting to cross back into the West Bank from abroad. Usama's disdain for his fellow Palestinians becomes visible as he observes an elderly Palestinian woman trying to haggle with an Israeli border official over the price of a customs duty. He wonders, "Effendi? Effendi! She called him! Usama almost reached out to slap the woman's black-swathed head. How can you use that word? Why the tears, woman? …Save them for what's going to keep on happening as long as there are people like you around" (*Wild Thorns* 18).

As quickly as we are introduced to Usama and his revolutionary idealism, we are also introduced to the Adil and his uncompromising realism. Adil is presented as a character who is less concerned with military resistance than with ensuring his and his family's daily survival and livelihood. The meeting between the two characters is portrayed as awkward and tense from the start, thus defying the type of reunion that one would expect between two family members who

have not seen each other for an extended period of time. Usama clearly perceives Adil's attitude as representative of other Palestinians still living in the Occupied Territories – lacking in resistance to the occupation. Usama asserts, "You're the ones to blame. You're the ones who hold the key to the situation". In response to his statement, Adil offers a simple yet sobering reply: "There's more than one dimension to the picture" (*Wild Thorns* 28).

**Steadfastness -** الصمود

This brief exchange between the two cousins provides us with a solid foundation, or starting point, for understanding the different ways in which the characters perceive their duties and in what ways they work to resist the Israeli occupation. It also prompts us to contemplate the existing tensions between those who reside in Palestine and those who have spent time in exile. While Usama supports armed struggle, Adil is willing to work within the system that is in place in the Occupied Territories in an effort to bring about positive change despite the harsh conditions of occupation. In addition, Adil focuses his energies on supporting his family in an effort to ensure their daily survival. Through supporting his family, and allowing them to have a dignified life, he ensures the survival of the Palestinian cause itself. In her article "Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada", Lori Allen discusses some of the political potential inherent in the daily actions of Palestinian residents living under siege. Allen writes:

> The process of managing everyday survival, which can be equally influential to the movement of politics, are somewhat more nebulous and unobtrusive, especially when they occur in the shadow of much more spectacular battles and bloodshed. The concept of "getting by" captures the many small actions in which political

> intention might inhere, especially when conditions on the ground do not provide enough evidence to link the potential with the dynamics of a political process. (460)

Allen elucidates the idea that the everyday tasks and routines of life under occupation, could potentially carry with them political meaning. When Usama asks his mother about Adil, she replies that Adil is, "working away day and night. He's got nine people to support, apart from the machine" (*Wild Thorns* 31). Additionally, Adil's attempts to make a better life for himself and others around him are exemplified when Usama's mother explains "how Adil has stood by her as though he were her own son. It was Adil who'd rented this house for her, who'd arranged for a truck from Nablus to move her belongings. It was Adil, too, who'd undertaken all the necessary formalities for Usama's return" (*Wild Thorns* 37). Adil's insistence on providing for his immediate and extended family helps to ensure that his family is not displaced or forced from their homes, thus echoing Allen's notion of everyday resistance or "Getting By". In many ways, these actions carry political meaning and potentially contribute to ensure the survival of the Palestinian cause.

Through portraying Usama's and Adil's divergent perceptions on resistance, Khalifeh illuminates the rift that has developed between the two cousins. The omniscient narrator muses: "In spite of their wide differences, they'd always agreed on one point: the value of the individual existed only through the group. Today, the difference between them lay in the fact that each believed he was in accord with the group" (*Wild Thorns* 87). Each character perceives his actions as being an essential and necessary part in resistance to the occupation, and both Usama and Adil view themselves to be a part of the overarching "group" representing Palestinian interests. However, the two characters diverge on a more simplistic level when discussing the notion of the

"group", as Adil perceives his loyalty to be to his fellow workers and his family, while Usama perceives his loyalty to be to the cause of resistance and those supporting his manifestation of struggle, whoever those may be. The two are not able to reconcile their differences and come to a greater understanding on the possible intersections present in their methods of resistance.

One of the examples that best illuminates the ideological split which has developed between Usama and Adil on the use of armed struggle versus steadfastness is evidenced when Adil is confronted by Usama outside of a Nablus bar about the Al-Karmi family farm, which has fallen into ruin because of Adil's decision to work inside Israel. Is it then that Adil breaks into tears and shouts, "Okay, convince me that what I'm doing isn't part of the struggle, that the fight has fixed ground rules…you can have my life, Usama, if you can only convince me that freedom means that people who can't defend themselves go hungry. And that there's happiness in hunger" (*Wild Thorns* 63). This shows another instance where Adil insists that he too is part of the resistance to the occupation but that as he said before "there is more than one dimension to the picture" (*Wild Thorns* 28). The two characters also complicate dominate views of resistance as necessarily associated with violence. *Wild Thorns* offers the reader a chance to explore what occupation can do to a human being, or a people, as well as the potential for varying meanings of resistance. In the novel both Usama and Adil view their lives and their personal choices as resistance to the occupation. Usama appears to only be willing to accept that a true form of resistance could be achieved through armed attacks against the occupier. On the contrary, his cousin is a firm believer in the notion that through steadfast dedication to his life, his family, and his home, he too is also working to resist the occupation.

Even though Adil remains dedicated to the idea of his steadfast resistance to the occupation, over the course of the novel Adil begins to refine his personal understanding and

articulation of the meaning of that resistance. After the injury of Abu Sabir, one of Adil's fellow factory workers, Adil appears to have a shift in his personal ideals relating to resistance to the occupation. Adil states, "We must adopt a new approach. Step by step we must learn to become masters and not victims" (*Wild Thorns* 109). This is a personal shift in Adil from what one might argue is some form of passive resistance, but what I will continue to refer to simply as steadfastness, in favor of a more active and informed form of resistance. Adil has made the conscious decision to pursue compensation for his fellow Palestinian worker who was injured while working in an Israeli factory and try to promote change within the Israeli legal system.

At this stage, Adil has decided that instead of merely being at the ebb and flow of a system of occupation that he and others like him must develop new methods of resistance. This new found direction echoes the writings of Fanon on the struggle for liberation. According to Fanon, "Liberation does not come as a gift from anybody; it is seized by the masses with their own hands. And by seizing it they themselves are transformed; confidence in their own strength soars, and they turn their energy and their experience to the tasks of building, governing, and deciding their own lives for themselves" (*A Dying Colonialism* 2) Through his realization, Adil is actively changing the rules of the game and shifting the dynamics of power that exist in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In particular, Adil focuses on reforming labor conditions, which represents one facet of the larger picture of the imbalance of power that exists between occupier and occupied.

Khalifeh offers the reader further examples of this steadfastness in *The End of Spring*. In the opening pages of *The End of Spring* Khalifeh introduces Ahmad Al-Qassam, the youngest son of the Al-Qassam family. The view of steadfastness under military occupation that Ahmad embodies grows out of the evolution of his character throughout the novel. Khalifeh initially

describes Ahmad as "a delicate boy, sensitive, gentle" (*The End of Spring* 2). Ahmad provides a contrast to his father, Fadel Al-Qassam, who Khalifeh describes as "a man of principles who was not afraid of the army or the occupation and who spoke the truth without a care" (*The End of Spring* 4). Along with his son Ahmad, Fadel himself exhibits a form of steadfastness. At the outbreak of the second intifada, despite the fact that he was not allowed to travel between cities, Fadel continues to work under the occupation even while his youngest son is confined to prison (*The End of Spring* 101). He is neither deterred by the occupation itself or by losing his youngest son to prison.

Khalifeh places Fadel and his younger son Ahmad in seeming opposition to each other. At one point in the novel, Fadel wonders, "how was this son of his going to make it with his soft heart like a girl's and his tied tongue that stuttered and his eyes hiding behind those sunglasses?" (*The End of Spring* 7). The view that the reader is initially given of Ahmad is one of a young Palestinian growing up under occupation but doing his best to detach himself from the reality of life in the occupied West Bank. The narrator comments that Ahmad, "just sat there in front of the television watching movies or Michael Jackson dancing on MTV" (*The End of Spring* 13) and that, "every time things flared up and the kids went out into the streets to protest – at first shouting and pandemonium, then stone throwing, then tear gas – he would sneak away without making a sound and hide in some faraway place" (*The End of Spring 12*). In a sense, however, Ahmad's initial reaction to the turmoil around him may be seen as an act of "internal resistance," even though he may not be fully aware of it. He withdraws into himself and loses (or *gains*) himself in activities, including pop culture, that allow him to control his own emotions, rather than allowing the occupation to dictate his mood and behavior.

Ahmad's way of life and his mild manners, however, are not regarded as acceptable to those around him, especially his father. Throughout the first portion of the novel, before the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada, Ahmad is predominantly portrayed as being scared or nervous, lacking social skills, and in the eyes of his father not quite a "man". Ahmad's father works to constantly compare his youngest son to the figure of Majid, the elder son in the Al-Qassam family. Fadel states that he wants Ahmad to, "be more like him, more like his brother, the son of Shahira, who knew how to joke around and hang out with the guys and get into trouble. You've got to be a man in this world, hard as granite, and this boy is like a girl" (*The End of Spring* 11). Unfortunately, Fadel's wishes come true under the hardest circumstances for Ahmad.

Over the course of the novel, Ahmad evolves and changes significantly in the face of the harsh military repression of the intifada. After the arrest of Ahmad and his cousin Issa as a result of their breaking into the neighboring Israeli settlement in a naïve and juvenile effort to retrieve Ahmad's pet cat which was stolen by a young Israeli settler child, Ahmad spends an extended period in Israeli prison suffering beatings and torture. This event marks not only the major personal shift in Ahmad- but also symbolizes the beginning and escalation of the intifada itself. This period also illuminates a major change in Ahmad's older brother Majid who almost involuntarily transitions from an aspiring singer to a resistance fighter. The shift for Majid comes very quickly when his patron, the head of the Al-Washmi family and a known collaborator, is found dead. Having gotten into an unpleasant confrontation with him, Majid believes that he will be the prime suspect in Al-Washmi's death, so he chooses to flee and is taken into the custody of resistance fighters. Khalifeh writes, "Just like that a new page was opened in the life of the young musician. He put down his guitar and picked up a machine gun" (*The End of Spring 106*).

After Majids transition into the role of a committed resistance fighter he returns home to visit his family after an extended period away. The reunion of Majid and his younger brother, who was recently released from Israeli prison, shows the evidence of the transformation that has taken place in both of Fadel Al-Qassam's sons. Khalifeh writes:

> Neither one showed the least bit of interest in the other. They didn't hug, they didn't shake hands; they didn't offer a word of endearment. Ahmad didn't shy away and he didn't blink. He was staring off in some direction with his ears pricked up, not showing any expression. The boy had changed; indeed he was more a young man. He had become serious and spoke with brevity and unsettling calmness. And Majid was different, too. His hair was short and dull, his shirt was dirty, and his face had been darkened by the sun. (*The End of Spring* 109)

Later in the novel, at the height of the Second Intifada, the change that Ahmad underwent while in Israeli custody is reflected as a new found dedication and steadfastness while working as a medic faced with the horrors of war. Khalifeh writes:

> He got up slowly at first, then quickly. At first he closed his eyes as he held a young man who had been hit by shrapnel and whose leg was amputated…with time, he opened his eyes and began tending to the wounded. He stitched wounds, cleansed burns, bound and set broken bones, administered shots. He became numb. He walked around hearing people scream in pain without showing the slightest bit of emotion. His main goal became to give something to these people, give them something from his heart or his blood. If it were possible, he would

> give them his soul, or more, because these people were like orphans with no refuge, no good, no God to watch over them. (*The End of Spring* 187)

Despite the steadfastness that Ahmad displays in his position as a medic who perseveres in his duties regardless of the horrors that he is faced with, Ahmad is not portrayed as being invincible. After being awoken from sleep by Um Suad, a Palestinian woman providing food and assistance to those working and fighting in Nablus during the second intifada, Ahmad is told that he "should eat, because you're young. You have your whole life ahead of you. Eat so you can grow and become an adult" (*The End of Spring* 189). Ahmad reflects on what he has seen in the course of his work and his life during the intifada, "Grow? Become and Adult?" he shouted without thinking. "For what? For who? I'd rather die than grow older and go on seeing what is happening and what will happen"" (*The End of Spring* 189). This example points to an ever present tension or burden that individuals living through war or occupation must come to terms with at a very early age. The youth in Palestine are clearly forced into adulthood before they are truly ready.

**Tension** - التوتر

*Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring* tackle the issue of tension present between Palestinians who have stayed inside the Occupied Territories and those viewed as "outsiders" for leaving Palestine. In *Wild Thorns*, this tension is manifested through the two main characters, Usama and Adil. Usama views Adil and other Palestinians like him, especially those working in Israeli factories, as weak or opportunistic for capitulating to the Israeli occupation. He sees his fellow countrymen as giving up on their nation and allowing it to be destroyed or stolen. Usama lets his views shine through clearly in the Nablus café as he sits observing a former friend,

Shahada, who has gotten rich as a factory worker inside of Israel. Watching Shahada flaunting his wealth in front of Adil, Usama simply says, "You let this cheap bastard talk about you that way and just sit there like an idiot! By God, murdering such people would be no crime" (*Wild Thorns* 94). Again, Usama speaks of Shahada by saying, "Shahada, who's abandoned the country and everything in it for the sake of a gold ring, a fancy pipe, and a wallet stuffed with money" (*Wild Thorns* 96) and "piss on your Arab heritage, piss on your nation and your homeland, go ahead, you can do it as long as the likes of Adil let you pay for their water pipes" (*Wild Thorns* 92).

Usama views people who have decided to make a life for themselves in Israel as individuals who have simply abandoned the cause of their people and their nation. The tension between Usama and Adil boils over outside of the café when Usama verbally attacks Adil. Usama yells,"I just don't believe that you've forgotten your own country and the occupation!". Adil immediately places himself in solidarity with Palestinians "inside" and opposed to those "outside", when he says, "The proof that I haven't forgotten my country is that I haven't left it" (*Wild Thorns* 98). The discussion then shifts from the apparent differences between the two characters to a more abstract one on Palestinians inside and outside generally. Adil states, "The Palestinians in Kuwait, Dhahran, and the Gulf? Let them help build industries in the West Bank and Gaza and we'd stop working "inside" straight away. But they won't do that. You know why? Because they don't want to risk their money; yet they want us to bear all the burdens of risk and sacrifice on our own" (*Wild Thorns* 98). Adil is effectively venting his frustrations about the historical tendency of the other Arab states which have consistently offered vocal support for the Palestinian cause, but have simultaneously been unwilling to offer concrete economic and political support in an effort to better the situation for the Palestinian people. Additionally,

Zuhdi, another of Adil's fellow factory workers, agrees with Adil. He asserts, " Here we are, burying our own shit all the time, and along comes Mr. Usama to tell us we've got to rely on ourselves" (*Wild Thorns* 84). The encounters between Usama and other characters such as Adil, Zuhdi, and Shahada reveal that Usama is now perceived as an outsider since he left Palestine for Kuwait. His speeches on freedom and dignity now fall on deaf ears. He both judges and is judged by the characters that opted to stay inside of Palestine instead of immigrating.

Similarly, in *The End of Spring* this tension is crucial to the novel. This time, however, the tension occurs between those Palestinians who work in Israeli settlements and those who do not. Majid, the eldest Al-Qassam son spent a summer working in the nearby Israeli settlement of Kiryat Shayba. Majid's father, upon learning of his sons' employment threatens to disown him by saying, "I'll tell them you're not my son, and deny that I know you at all. I'll run it in the newspaper for an entire week" (*The End of Spring* 24). Additionally, in *The End of Spring*, Khalifeh illuminates the issue of insider/outsider tension, or the tension present between Palestinians living outside of the Occupied Territories and those who have remained inside. During a family dinner in which Fadel Al-Qassam is present, an expatriate Palestinian man who is visiting his family in Ramallah states:

> On television we used to see you carrying weapons and carrying out military operations day after day. But now I see that you don't really care…And some of you are saying "Let's settle for half", and others, "Let's settle for a quarter", and we outsiders don't know who to believe. (*The End of Spring* 252)

As a response to this attack, Fadel Al-Qassam replies:

> Do you think that we're sitting here laughing and playing around? We're sitting here weighed down with worry and nobody gives a damn. The Arabs don't give a damn and neither does the UN or Europe, not even you native sons who live outside…We carried weapons bigger than ourselves and chanted slogans greater than ourselves and carried out operations that gave the enemy a cover for all their atrocities. (*The End of Spring* 253)

This back and forth argument between the two Palestinian men further highlights the divisions that Khalifeh tackles in her work. The example illuminates the legitimate resentment that Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories feel towards those on the outside. Specifically, their resentment is directed at individuals who criticize their actions relating to methods of resistance, or how life under occupation is handled, without offering concrete support and reliable alternatives that could help to ease tension or solve problems. Khalifeh discusses the point of tension herself in a short piece simply titled, "Tension". She says, "Our life under Occupation cannot be described in one word. But, if I were to do so, I think that no word would serve so well as "tension". Tension inside, tension outside. One the personal level and on the common. Between you and the occupiers. Between you and those behind the Bridge. And between you and yourself. Different ideologies, different points of view, different influences and reflections" (Tension 26).

**Education -** التعليم

While discussing steadfastness, Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* touches on the issue of education that is in fact crucial to the idea *Sumud* or resistance. She does so in a very interesting and unique

way. After being put in Israeli prison for demonstrating against Israel, the young idealistic Basil finds himself watching an informal education system unfold before him. Khalifeh writes, "The 'people's school' was now in session and the prisoners broke up into small groups. In this corner, there was basic literacy. Over there, preparation for elementary school exams. In the far corner, high-school courses" (*Wild Thorns* 123). Education has been a crucial part to the Palestinian struggle for independence and an end to the Israeli occupation, as evidenced by the Israeli criminalization of those found to be taking part in "alternative education" in the wake of closed schools and universities during the first intifada *(Civilian Jihad 143),* as well as by the importance placed on education in Palestinian society. To further comprehend the importance of education in Palestine, one must examine relevant statistics: An-Najah University in Nablus was ranked the #1 Palestinian university, ranked as the #7 university in the Arab world, and in the top 5% of universities worldwide (An-Najah University). The emphasis on education both in Palestinian society as well as Palestinian literature reiterates Aime Cesaire's assertion that education is a crucial dimension in the power play between colonizer and colonized (*Discourse on Colonialism* 25).

In addition, theorists like Fanon also acknowledge the importance of education in the revolutionary struggle, even if it is informal. Fanon advocates the use of armed struggle, but at the same time acknowledges that open resistance cannot and will not achieve a total overhaul of the system. People are needed on all levels to build a new society and throw off an oppressor or occupier. Fanon states, "The masses resist and fight in a thousand ways, not only with arms in hand" (*A Dying Colonialism* 3). This Palestinian insistence on the importance of education provides another opportunity for the development of an additional meaning to the term resistance in the Palestinian context, as well as adding depth to the notion of education in Palestine. To

further illustrate the point, Emad Ghaiadah, a student at Birzeit University north of Jerusalem during the 1980's, took eight years to complete his degree due to forced closures of the university by the Israeli military as well as arbitrary arrests that made attending classes impossible. Despite the obstacles placed in front of him, he completed a bachelor's degree in Political Science (*Peaceful Resistance* 84). In other words, education represents both, a practical means of survival and progress as well as a symbolic way of resisting occupation itself by refusing to become stagnant and fall behind.

However, Khalifeh problematizes her characters' views of education as well. Later in the novel Basil, who initially seemed enamored by the informal prison education system, changes his ideological position. He asserts, "True revolutionaries don't carry books. They carry weapons! Daggers! The effect of daggers is guaranteed!" (*Wild Thorns* 151). In this instance Khalifeh echoes Fanon's thesis on the potential for a split between the "revolutionary" and the "intellectual". Basil's sudden awareness of the limitations of education (or the educated) reiterates Fanon's warning that often times the "revolutionary intellectual" or the "bourgeoisie intellectual" from a formerly colonial society is constantly on the verge of becoming one of the oppressors. Fanon argues that the middle class intellectuals that often assume power at the end of a colonial period are in effect replacing the bourgeois intellectual from the former colonizing power (*The Wretched of The Earth* 149). Additionally, Fanon states that the native intellectual upon the end of the colonial period or upon independence "will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeois" (*The Wretched of The Earth* 166). Fanon's thesis illuminates the divide between "revolutionary" and "intellectual" and suggests the possibility that the two can become mutually exclusive.

**Armed Resistance** – المقاومة المسلحة

Resistance is an important theme throughout both of Khalifeh's novels. While in *Wild Thorns* much of the emphasis is placed on contrasting the different views of resistance, in *The End of Spring*, Khalifeh focuses on the figure of the resistance fighter, complicating what armed struggle means. Khalifeh continually presents Majid in a manner that highlights the mental and emotional struggles that weigh on his conscious after transitioning from an aspiring musician into a resistance fighter. When Majid was confronted with a discussion about suicide bombing, which was being employed by Palestinian resistance fighters against Israel, he is portrayed as undergoing a serious internal struggle with regards to suicide terrorism even though he is a committed resistance fighter.

When discussing a specific suicide attack which took place in Netanya, an Israeli city west of Nablus, Majid desperately attempts to change the subject away from suicide bombings. Khalifeh writes: "He tried to change the subject. He wanted to have a pleasant conversation, a lighthearted conversation, a happy moment to make him feel that he was human" (*The End of Spring* 118). This example shows that Majid may see his role as a resistance fighter as one that dehumanizes him, and he searches for the opportunity to mentally distance himself from his role at least momentarily. This example adds depth to the idea of the resistance fighter and contrasts potentially homogenous viewpoints on resistance fighters as one-dimensional and apathetic.

**Mental and Emotional Effects** – التأثيرات العاطفية و النفسية

Khalifeh devotes a substantial portion of her novels to the investigation of the personal mental, emotional, and physical struggle that one must endure when living under a military

occupation. This point is exemplified in *Wild Thorns* when the inebriated Adil, standing alone outside of a Nablus bar, reflects on his society by saying:

> An entire nations drowning while the radio goes on spewing out songs of hope and fervour, freedom, rebirth, the happiness of man…Myopic eyes, hearts filled with thousands of regrets, hands shackled by thousands of chains…Sink into the mud, oh Palestine of mine, and suffer, my people, the bitterness of recognizing reality and being helpless before it. (*Wild Thorns* 61).

This example shows the inner turmoil that the character faces, brought out by alcohol, where his deepest feelings are revealed. He is unable to maintain his usual demeanor, his usual steadfastness. This example also works to humanize Adil, to show that even a seemingly strong individual cannot always be stoic and collected. It illuminates the notion that, at least occasionally, life under a constant military occupation will get to you.

Even in the case of Usama, who seems so committed to armed resistance, there are moments when he begins to second guess himself. He reflects on a memory from his childhood, where his father purchased a juvenile lamb to be slaughtered on feast day. Usama remembers how he had wept at the slaughter of the lamb and eulogized its death (*Wild Thorns 78*). His inner turmoil over his resistance mission is exemplified as he suddenly invokes and is haunted by the memory of the dead lamb. Khalifeh writes, "A shocking idea suddenly struck him. Would he be able to undertake the mission that was required of him? How could he actually kill people – he, Usama, who'd once mourned for a lamb slaughtered on feast day?" (*Wild Thorns* 78).

The portrayal of Usama as a humane, kind man who would not even kill a lamb under normal circumstances is very telling. Under circumstances of war and occupation, even the

kindest people can be transformed into individuals capable of committing atrocities. Examples such as that of Usama do not point to an evil inherent in those carrying out armed struggle, but instead accentuate the evil inherent in acts of war or occupation that can be so mentally or emotionally debilitating that individuals are driven to commit such grave crimes. Usama's reflections and self-doubt about the act which he is to carry out echo the point which Talal Asad makes with regards to suicide bombing. Asad writes, "the reason the combatant kills others by dying is often traced to the systematic deprivation and humiliation he has suffered – to his sense that, in confronting an overwhelming and ruthless adversary, common destruction is the only possible response (*On Suicide Bombing* 42). In many ways, the novel reminds us that contrary to popular belief, suicide bombers, or terrorists generally, are not inherently evil individuals who enjoy killing and destruction. On the contrary, as is the case with Usama, they often resort to it as a means of revenge against a brutal occupier, or out of desperation. This is not to say that Khalifeh – or this study for that matter – condones suicide bombing under any circumstances. It is my intention rather to examine the complex circumstances under which violence is born and bred as portrayed in the novel.

**Class Solidarity in Resistance** – التضامن الطبقي في المقاومة

In addition to the discussion that *Wild Thorns* engages in about various methods of resistance, the novel also touches on issues of class solidarity and the role that class plays in the resistance struggle. Through the character of Zuhdi, we see that solidarity can, or should, exist – between fellow workers, despite differences in nationality or seemingly different political views. Zuhdi initially struggles with the potential that any kind of meaningful similarities could exist between himself and that of Shlomo, an Israeli worker in the same factory. However, Zuhdi cannot help but wonder if they are both being exploited by a capitalist employer who does not

value them as human beings but who is more interested in reaping the benefits of their labor. This is evidenced when Zuhdi, looking on at a group of Israeli workers, says, "Was it true that these men were exploited just as he was, equally deceived and misled? Were they too victims of economic interests, used to satisfy the ambitions of a select few?" (*Wild Thorns* 109). After Zuhdi is placed in Israeli prison for attacking Shlomo when he used the racist epithet "*Aravim Muloukhlakhim*" [Dirty Arabs] to describe a recent terrorist attack against an Israeli family, Zuhdi realizes that the two were not as different as he initially may have believed. His sense of sorrow and regret is haunting. Khalifeh writes, "He had a sudden memory of the man on the ground, his head split open, his eyes staring upwards, and he felt regret and a deep sense of guilt. Shlomo wasn't bad. He knew that now" (*Wild Thorns* 128).

This example echoes Aime Cesaire's thesis that colonization dehumanizes even the most civilized man and that it affects both the colonizer and the colonized (*Discourse on Colonialism* 20). Part of the colonial project is the dehumanization of the colonized, and through this process of dehumanization, Zuhdi was pushed to a stage where he chose to attack Shlomo despite their friendship or, at the least, the class solidarity between them. This example offers a counter narrative to the colonial project and proves that there is room for differentiation between colonizers and colonized. Simultaneously, the example works to humanize the Israeli which, in the context of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, can often be equally dehumanized by those working against colonial oppression and occupation. Despite the counter narrative created in this particular example, Zuhdi still ultimately chooses to attack Shlomo, thus confirming the fact that changing power relations is extremely difficult in the case of colonizer and colonized.

**Human Solidarity** – التضامن الانساني

Khalifeh offers two specific instances in *Wild Thorns* that highlight the potential for human solidarity between Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the method of resistance that may best foster the growth of this potential for nonviolence. Additionally, these instances illuminate Khalifeh's promotion of a sense of connectedness based in humanity, regardless of one's political, ethnic, or religious affiliation. At one point in *Wild Thorns* Usama stabs an Israeli officer to death in the middle of a Nablus market. Almost immediately, the elderly Um Sabir, feels sympathy for the Israeli woman whose husband was murdered. Khalifeh writes, "Something was shaking the locked doors of Um Sabir's heart. She softened and responded to the woman's unspoken plea. 'God have mercy on you!' she muttered" (*Wild Thorns* 159). Um Sabir also takes pity on the daughter of the slain Israeli officer and covers her with her veil as she is lying on the ground. This very concrete act may be considered a reflection of something much bigger: Um Sabir must choose between her feelings of resentment (towards a representative of occupation) and her feelings of compassion. And she chooses to err on the side of humanity. Um Sabir unveils herself to protect someone who appears to be so different than her. The seemingly vast political and ethnic divides between them almost instantaneously vanish in that moment, and both are humanized and placed on an equal level. Politics, religion, and other differences are momentarily gone, and only humanity remains.

In this same scene, we witness Adil carrying off the officers' daughter on his shoulders while leading the grieving wife away from the body of her dead husband (*Wild Thorns* 160). I believe these instances allude to the possibilities of human connection that may be established, even briefly, through adopting a non-violent stance towards an afflicted other. This is not to fall into the trap of saying that those who carry out violent resistance are without humanity or that

non-violence is inherently better than armed struggle. I am merely pointing to two instances where even though both Um Sabir and Adil are forced to live under the Israeli occupation they are not blind to a shared humanity with Israelis.

At the close of the *Wild Thorns* the interplay between nonviolent steadfastness and armed struggle comes to the forefront one final time. Usama carries out his mission and attacks the Egged buses carrying Palestinian workers into Israel. He dies in the midst of armed resistance; similarly, Zuhdi abandons notions of class solidarity and finds himself a part of the armed struggle even though he was on the Egged bus that was attacked. Adil however, was not on the Egged bus that day, since he had gone to Haifa with Abu Sabir to try to secure compensation for his work related injury. He was, in essence carrying out the steadfast resistance that was characteristic of him throughout the novel. In the midst of revolutionary struggle many died in armed resistance while others tried to secure justice and freedom through alternative means. *Wild Thorns* ends with a guardedly optimistic outlook by Adil who struggles at so many points to keep himself moving forward without falling apart. Adil asserts, "We can still hope that our children will succeed where we've failed…we mourn our fate, but the trust men place in us keeps us going" (*Wild Thorns* 205). Adil concludes, "You search for yourself in other people's eyes, Adil. You find yourself mirrored in the eyes of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, those who live in tents. The winds and storms toss you in all directions. But the will to live still beats within you, defiant and instinctive" (*Wild Thorns* 206). This is indicative of Adil's attitude all along; he continues to move on despite the challenges. His home and family have fallen apart, but he keeps going because for him that is the essence of his life and his resistance

**Political Critique** – النقد السياسي

One of the unique aspects of Khalifeh's *The End of Spring* is the critique that it offers on both the Palestinian Authority generally and its former leader Yasser Arafat specifically. The novel is partially set in the Muqat'a, Arafats Ramallah compound, during the Israeli siege and blockade of Ramallah during the second intifada, thus allowing the reader an intimate view of Palestinian leadership and political power structures. Khalifeh creates a space for discussion relating to commonly held views of Palestinian leadership and the potential for a break with some of the commonly held notions of unity when confronted with the reality of politics and the faults of Palestinian political leadership. *The End of Spring* illuminates the divide between Majid as the resistance fighter and the Palestinian Authority leadership, particularly Arafat, who Majid is charged with protecting while barricaded in the Ramallah compound.

The second part of *The End of Spring* opens by providing the reader with the basis for this critique. Khalifeh writes:

> He and his comrades were to respond to an attack on the president's door, they were to protect the president if the situation required, he should give his life to defend this man who was a stranger to him, a man he didn't know and didn't understand and didn't believe in. Why die for a man he only knew as a face in a picture? The picture of a system that had done nothing to avert danger, but rather had brought it upon him. (*The End of Spring* 164).

This example highlights Majid's personal struggle with his views of the Palestinian leadership. It illuminates a potential disconnect between political figures and those who serve under them in times of conflict. As a resistance fighter, Majid is actively fighting to protect the "nation", or

Palestine generally. During this time period, Yasser Arafat was the living embodiment of the idea of the Palestinian nation. Majid struggles with the idea of protecting a figure that he does not believe in, and someone who, to Majid, does not truly embody the cause that he is fighting for. In brief, he has a hard time sacrificing for someone who actually put him and his fellow compatriots in harm's way. His love for the Palestinian cause may be unconditional, but he is not blind to the shortcomings of the Palestinian leadership, specifically Arafat. When Majid is finally confronted with Arafat in the flesh, he compares him to the image he has always had in his mind based on his family's accounts of the Palestinian leader. Majid states, "His grandmother had said many times that he was a giant of a man, with a voice like thunder and piercing eyes as sharp as knives. And now he saw that he was a regular person, not a giant, and his voice did not thunder and froth. But his eyes – truly his eyes were piercing" (*The End of Spring* 166).

These passages illuminate a very important but less often discussed aspect of the Palestinian struggle, the issues of internal political problems and the popular views of political leadership. Khalifeh, through weaving in first hand personal accounts of the siege on Arafat's compound by his attendant journalist Rashid Hilal, complicates what is often considered a more united view of Palestinian politics (*The End of Spring* 281). By showing the disconnects between the average Palestinian or the resistance fighter and Arafat or the Palestinian Authority, Khalifeh highlights that Palestinian politics and Palestinian society does not form a single unified voice. This is an issue often overlooked when discussing Palestinian politics during the period.

Furthermore, Khalifeh expands on this critique of the Palestinian Authority when discussing the true level of control which the Authority exercised in the West Bank during the intifada, as well as the popular perception of the Palestinian Authority itself. Khalifeh writes:

> The areas under the Sulta (Authority - سُلطة) were more like chunks of Salata (Salad - سَلَطة) – that's what people on the street would say, with frenzied laughter: the salata security forces, the salata government, the salata chaos. The areas under the Sulta were geographic shreds, a torn shirt with its pieces strew in different valleys…On the map it looked like drops of oil in muddy watter. It was disheartening to see something with no shape and no border and no demarcation line. As for the leadership, the areas under the Sulta consisted of family groups and tribes and organizations like cucumbers and tomatoes and radishes and lettuce and parsley all packed into a cardboard box with no bottom, no top, and no sides. (*The End of Spring* 181)

The example highlights the nature of the Palestinian Authority's power and control during the second Intifada and the manner in which the functioning Palestinian government was viewed by average Palestinians. This scene alludes to the idea that the Palestinian Authority often represents a "puppet" government, incapable of executing any real control or operating, essentially at the whim, of the Israeli military occupying the West Bank. Additionally Khalifeh points out what is still today an observable fact in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority only effectively controls a small, noncontiguous area of West Bank territory, namely that of the major population centers.

An alternative political view is highlighted again when a young Gazan employee of the Palestinian Authority is standing in the Nablus kitchen of Um Suad benignly complaining about how his jacket is too large. Um Suad comments:

> I'm sure they stretched it out so it would be big enough. They knew! …And what Um Suad meant was that the Sulta, which he was a part of, knew all along that we would be bombed and screwed. These days there was no big difference between the suit and the person wearing it – they stretched out the suits and stretched us out, too, so we would be big and roomy and get screwed. (*The End of Spring* 188)

Passages like this one show evidence of the often unspoken disillusionment experienced by average citizens with regards to their leadership. In the Palestinian context this is extremely important due to the nature of Palestinian politics and the often dominating nature of the two primary parties, Hamas and Fatah (Palestinian Authority). In the case of the Palestinian Authority, this example encourages discussion on the popular perception of the Palestinian Authority as the supported representative for Palestinians and a potentially divergent perception as an organization lacking authority, working without the interests of the people in mind, and suffering from high levels of corruption.

Additionally, Khalifeh touches on political corruption in *The End of Spring*. While barricaded with Arafat in his compound, Majid hears that Hosni Mubarak, then the president of Egypt, has sent water or food to those Palestinians under siege with Arafat. Majid says that, "Mubarak sent his heartfelt condolences, and also some bottles of water. I found out later that Mubarak had actually sent mango juice, but that Squad 17 drank it all and left us the bottles of water…was that why they talked about "corruption" and "a corrupt government?"" (*The End of Spring* 211). In this simple instance Khalifeh highlights the hierarchical nature of political corruption through which provisions are distributed and consumed by the elite security forces serving under Yasser Arafat while lower level resistance fighters are left with virtually nothing, even though they have been actively fighting in the streets against the Israeli occupation.

In the article, “Watching U.S. Television from the Palestinian Street: The Media, The State, and Representational Interventions”, Amahl Bishara highlights this political corruption as well as the existing disconnect between the elite leadership and average Palestinians. When speaking of both the Palestinian Authority and those working in the NGO sector in Palestine, Bishara writes, “both are regarded with skepticism by many Palestinians, because they are viewed as corrupt, or as more accountable to Western funding organizations than to local Palestinians” (“Watching U.S. Television from the Palestinian Street” 7). Political corruption has been an issue that continually plagues the Palestinian Authority, and during the second intifada the issue came to the forefront because of the especially harsh conditions of the uprising. As Bishara notes, “the PA has also been known for corruption, which was a major political issue before and during the second intifada. The PA leadership has always depended on Western powers for legitimacy and economic aid, but their dependence grew exponentially during the economic collapse of the second intifada” (“Watching U.S. Television from the Palestinian Street” 8).

Additionally, Bishara highlights the split further when discussing the idea of the “elite” and how it is translated into the Arabic language. Bishara states, “the category of the elite, which is difficult to translate into Arabic in terms of both denotation and connotation, can be contrasted with the Palestinian concept of “sha’bi” – شعبي, or “the popular”, a term with moral as well as social weight in Palestinian society” (“Watching U.S. Television from the Palestinian Street” 7). Even when speaking on a linguistic level, it is challenging to properly denote a full meaning in Arabic for the idea of political elite. It is much easier however to simply place it in contrast to a term that is very easily understood, especially in the Palestinian lexicon, that of the “Sha’b”. Khalifeh, through her novels, echoes some of the points that scholars such as Bishara make;

particularly that the elite is disconnected from the "Sha'b", or the people, and is in turn made suspect by them. This was especially true during the second intifada which in many ways solidified the rift between the average person and those holding political office.

**From Fighter to Politician** – من المجاهد الى السياسي

Throughout most of the siege on Yasser Arafat's compound, Majid finds himself in seeming opposition to the Palestinian Authority, Arafat himself, as well as the higher ranking Palestinian resistance fighters. However, towards the end of the siege, the reader can discern another important shift in Majid. While previously he had undergone a transformation from an aspiring musician to a resistance fighter, at this stage in the novel Majid begins to transform again. Now Majid's transformation is from his role as a resistance fighter to that of a politician. It is in this transformation that the reader is offered a literary interpretation of the story of Yasser Arafat who made this same transition from resistance fighter to political leader. Majid says, "I started watching my step and the steps of politicians and leaders, calculating how to rise in the ranks. Aligning with the leader meant power, position, rank, salary. It meant becoming a cabinet director, then a cabinet minister" (*The End of Spring* 216).

Additionally Majid states:

> I traded in my khaki outfit for a suit, and I traded in my weapons for a pen that I waved around as I spoke and explained and said loudly and clearly things like "democracy" and "the concerns of the people" and "resurrecting the government," to the point where I believed everything I was saying..The truth was I wasn't in touch with any of it…I had lost touch with the word on the street, with the pulse of the people. I knew nothing about my people. (*The End of Spring* 217)

This example, which illustrates a decisive turning point in Majid's life, may be seen as an allegorical moment that sheds light on Palestinian national politics and leadership. In his article, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism", Frederic Jameson discusses the potential for third-world, or "post-colonial" literature to act as national allegory. Jameson writes that, "third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (69). The story of Majid in *The End of Spring* and his gradual transformation from singer to resistance fighter, and then from resistance fighter to politician portrays the evolution and story of Arafat himself. Majid embodies transformations that Arafat, or even other politicians undergo throughout their lives as they navigate their ascent to power and often fall from grace in the eyes of their people. Khalifeh's literary critique shows us how easy it is to fall into the trap of assuming a homogeneous nature to Palestinian politics. Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring* deconstruction various misconceptions about Palestinian politics by offering a contemporary critique of not only the Israeli occupation but of the Palestinian leadership itself. Her biting criticism is crucial to a fuller understanding the Israel-Palestine conflict and the multitude of forces that influence either side.

**Closing Remarks**

Through the examination of *Wild Thorns* and *The End of Spring*, this study has shown that contemporary Palestinian literature often offers much insight into the ways in which we conceptualize history, society, culture, and politics in the Palestinian context. These novels complicate the mainstream Western viewpoint on the Israel-Palestine conflict and provide space for reflecting on alternative viewpoints with regard to resistance & military occupation. While

armed struggle unquestionably represents a form of resistance to occupation, Khalifeh proves that it is by no means the only or most viable means of resistance. Khalifeh proves that a multitude of forces play a role in the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine and that as Adil succinctly put it, “There’s more than one dimension to the picture” (Wild Thorns 28).

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