

Guiding Questions for 2019 Ghassan Kanafani Resistance Arts Scholarship

These questions serve as a guide to prompt discussion of the submissions in the anthology.

1. In Aya Ghanameh's "Alienation" – she traces the experiences of Palestinians in exile and how they relate to, and understand their Palestinian identity.
 - a. What are the ways Palestinians experience alienation in exile?
 - b. What is the Palestinian identity? What are the ways Palestinians understand and relate their Palestinian identity? How do you understand Palestinian identity?
 - c. How has displacement/exile informed Palestinian identity?
 - d. Discuss this passage with an excerpt from Ghassan Kanafani's *The Land of Sad Oranges*,

"I heard you in the other room asking your mother: "Mama, am I a Palestinian? When she answered "Yes" a heavy silence fell on the whole house. It was as if something hanging over our heads had fallen, its noise exploding, then – silence."

2. In the piece titled "Ramadan" by an anonymous submission from Montreal, Canada, they highlight the alienation experienced living as a Palestinian in Canada. Discuss this passage,

"I realized this is what I have been doing ever since I moved to Canada: renewing my hope and telling people our story. I am Palestinian-Canadian, but I never really felt the whole Canadian part until my second year of university. For a while, I refused to call myself Canadian: "I could have been living in Palestine with Palestinian being my only national identity." I decided to embrace my place of birth, a place that gives me my own voice in its own way. I realized it is part of who I am, instead of rejecting it, I will thrive.

I was always called the "lucky one." The first person in my family born in Canada. The one who got to be away from Palestine's misery. None of this is lucky, I struggle too. I was always jealous of people with a normal situation. I began to refuse victimizing myself for being Palestinian. I started to embrace my identity. If anyone was lucky, it was me. I am living the struggle of the occupation and having a voice to impact those who have their hands tied. I started to be me between people, that Palestinian one. A lingering feeling I had was my increasing need to be

empathetic for my own people in Gaza. What could I do? I live on the outside”

- a. What are the unique ways Palestinians living in North America struggle with in terms of navigating their identity/experiences?
- b. Discuss what the author means by “lucky one.” How does geographical proximity to Palestine impact one’s relationship to Palestine and the Palestinian struggle?

3. In both of Kanafani’s works, *Umm Saad* (1969) and *Returning to Haifa* (1969), Kanafani places the future in the hands of the new generation of Palestinians, whose commitment and emotional ties to Palestine are stronger than the more concrete connections experienced by their parents (Riley & Harlow, 2000).

- a. In what ways does Palestinian art and cultural production in exile strengthen youth’s expression of Palestinian identity/narratives in the diaspora? Reference anthology submissions to prompt!

4. Ghassan Kanafani in his study on the “Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine,” first employed the term “resistance” (*muqawamah*) in speaking of Palestinian literature. His fiction, including short novels, stories, and children's literature address the Palestinian situation. Kanafani describes the political, social, and human realities that characterize the lives of Palestinian people (Riley & Harlow, 2000).

- a. How are themes of resistance deployed in Palestinian literature?
- b. How can resistance literature be utilized for the Palestinian struggle?

5. In “Handala’s Dream,” Lina Mohammed Abojaradeh writes, “Can you understand what only/the Olive Trees know?”

- a. Why does the poetic speaker choose to describe the relationship between expelled Palestinians and the flora of Palestine as one of transmitted knowledge?
- b. How does the poetic construction of knowledge as a bounty shared between the land and people shape the understanding of Palestinian identity that the text seems to elaborate?

6. In the poem “Za’atar,” Kaleem Hawa writes lines such as “the *argileh* smoke replaces language: . . . *Laban ayran* is yogurt that has given up... Hummus is warm emulsified memory.”

- a. How do the substances consumed come to embody the displaced longing of the exile?

- b. Based on your understanding of the rhythms and logics of this poem, why do you feel that food and related culinary rituals might hold such importance in Palestinian literatures of exile? How might exile affect the relationship between Palestinian rituals of nourishment and memory?
7. In “Telling Stories” by Reem Farhat, an unnamed Palestinian taxi cab driver tells the poetic speaker, “Make sure you come back here and tell our stories.” Many years ago, the Palestinian critic Edward Said would observe that Palestinians had been denied “permission to narrate.”
- a. How does the act of writing become a gesture of resistance and defiance when Palestinian stories are intentionally blocked from view?
 - b. If telling one Palestinian’s story is inherently the process of telling another’s, as evidenced by this piece, does the practice of writing assume a newfound responsibility within the larger anti-colonial struggle?