

Celebration of Woman Heroism and Sacrifice: Intertextual Elements in Abu Sibah's Novel "A Wheat Spike and a Sword"

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Abstract: *Intertextuality refers to the notion that every individual's speech derives from and is shaped by its constant interaction with other individuals' speech (Bakhtin, 1999; Fairclough, 1992; Lemke, 1995). Drawing on this view of text construction, this study examines the intertextual references in the biography novel "A Wheat Spike and a Sword" written by the Palestinian novelist Attallah Abu Sibah to celebrate the life of the heroic woman Maryam Farahat – also known as Um Nidal Farahat (1949-2013) – as a woman role model for sacrifice, heroism and piety. After collecting all intertextual references in the novel, the researchers classified them into broad categories and analyzed their use and significance. The study shows that the novelist draws mainly on religious references from the Holy Quran and Prophetic Hadith as they are rich sources for representations, overt and covert denotations, and injunctions on various themes. The study also examined traces of literary and historical intertextuality and discussed their contribution to the novel's dominant themes. The multiplicity of intertextual references that are skillfully employed to celebrate the life and sacrifice of Um Nidal Farahat are used to reflect a harmony and a consensus over women's roles in the Palestinian society and over the nationalist goals of the Palestinian liberation movement.*

Keywords: *intertextuality – religious references – woman image – Palestinian literature – national struggle*

1. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the intertextual references drawn upon in the novel and examines the intended meanings and images generated as a result of the various inter-texts used by the novelist in his portrayal of the novel's main character. The novel 'A White Spike and A sword', written by the Palestinian writer and novelist Attallah Abu Sibah, belongs to the common literary type of 'biography novel' and deals with the biography of the late Palestinian woman Maryam Farahat, known as Um Nidal, 1949-2013, as she sacrificed her sons for the duty of defending her homeland. Um Nidal, the novel's heroine, has become a symbol of the resistance of the Palestinian people and their sacrifices. The importance of the novel lies in that it sheds light on the role of Palestinian women, as embodied in Um Nidal's, in leading the resistance against the Israeli occupation and standing by their men in their struggle to end the military occupation of Palestine.

Perhaps the writer's aim in naming his novel "A Wheat Spike and A Sword" is that the 'wheat spike' symbolizes a land full of giving and benevolence, while the 'sword' represents strength and pride such that land is protected by the sword. The symbolism commonly attached to the wheat spike and the sword gains additional meanings as the novel traces the life, trials and victories of the central woman character, Um Nidal, a prominent Palestinian figure who came to represent giving, sacrifice and steadfastness despite all hardships.

The writer, Abu Sibah, was quite successful in providing detailed descriptions of characters and events and he offers a synopsis of the history of a struggling people under occupation. Thus, the novel's heroine Um Nidal becomes a symbol for the Palestinian people who did not lay down their arms, and particularly embodies the Palestinian woman whether a daughter, mother, sister, and/or a wife. The novel weaves in a series of connected events and presents a fine-tuned narrative of an important era of the history of the Palestinian people (from the first Intifada of 1987 to the time of writing this novel in 2014).

The novel's writer is Dr. Attallah Abu Sibah, former Minister of Culture and Minister of Detainees and Ex-detainees' Affairs in the Gaza-Based government. Abu Sibah is a Palestinian refugee from Sawafir Sharqi village in pre-1948 occupied land. He received his basic and secondary education in Rafah City in southern Gaza, where he currently lives. He received his Ph.D. from Um Durman University in Sudan, and then worked as Dean of Students Affairs at the Islamic University of Gaza. Abu Sibah is a well-known writer and poet and has written several poetry volumes.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality refers to the notion that every individual's speech derives from, is shaped by, and draws on its constant interaction with other individuals' speech, i.e., utterances (Bakhtin, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1999; Lemke, 1995). That is, "an utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication, and it cannot be broken off from preceding links that determine it both from within and from without, giving rise within it to unmediated responsive reactions and dialogic reverberations" (Bakhtin, 1999: 131). Each word, utterance, or stretch of discourse is understood in relation to other words, utterances, or discourses and it makes sense "to understand just which other texts a particular community considers relevant to the interpretation of any given text" (Lemke 1995: 23).

Fairclough (1992) cites Kristeva (1986) who historicizes the construction of texts from other texts; that is, every text is built up, responds to, and derives from previous texts and in this way takes part in the formulation of history itself, prepares for processes of change, and helps construct successive texts. For Bakhtin, language is not an abstract system of signs, but is "overpopulated with other people's voices, and the social practices and contexts they invoke" (cited in Maybin, 2001: 67). Juvan (2008) argues that intertextuality is constitutive of all textuality and may be foregrounded in literary works, genres, or styles, and for Hatim and Mason (1993: 129) it is "a force which extends the boundaries of textual meanings."

Fairclough (1999) argues that intertextual analysis links text to context since it draws on the discursive processes that readers and writers use to make sense of the text as well as on the various genres and discourses which are realized in texts in various forms and configurations. Fairclough points out that identifying such genres and discursive configurations depends on the analyst's interpretive work and his or her familiarity and experience with the relevant orders of discourse. Identifying intertextual traces of other genres, discourses, and voices drawn into the texts is typically realized by examining quotations, lexical references, presupposition, irony, metaphors, and other textual features which allude to borrowings from other texts (Fairclough, 1992).

In this respect, part of the dialogic nature of texts is that they often contain traces of other voices and discourses as text producers partly construct meanings by explicitly or implicitly reproducing, re-contextualizing, or invoking voices, especially those of authoritative figures. These intertextual traces are intended to influence the reader/hearer who is expected to build on his or her prior knowledge and understanding of the world and establish connections between the target texts and other texts. Citing Bakhtin, Maybin (2001: 65) elaborates that invoking a particular voice also entails invoking an evaluative viewpoint or what Volosinov termed "evaluative accent", i.e. "the kind of judgment which words or phrases convey, about what they are referring to."

This view of text, not as an autonomous linguistic product disconnected from the sociocultural and ideological conditions in which it is produced and received, corresponds to Foucauldian conceptions of discourse and the extended notion of linguistic text, i.e. "No text is innocent, and every text reflects a fragment of the world ... texts are political because all discursive formations are political. Analyzing text or discourse therefore means analyzing discursive formations that are essentially political in character and ideological in content." (Kumaravadivelu, 1999: 460) Discursive practice is seen as mediating the relation between text and sociocultural practice.

Fairclough (1992) draws a distinction between "manifest" intertextuality and "constitutive" intertextuality or "interdiscursivity". Manifest intertextuality refers to features of other texts which are explicitly demarcated or implicitly cued in the text. Examples of manifest intertextuality include reported speech, presupposition, metadiscourse, negation and irony. Interdiscursivity highlights the heterogeneity of text construction as one text type is shaped by a blend of elements of orders of discourse such as genres, discourses, narratives, styles or activity types which text producers orient to and articulate in their discourses. Here critical analysts probe into processes of text production,

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distribution and reception. That is, they investigate the ways in which text producers and interpreters draw on particular discursive practices and conventions which can be realized in the linguistic features of a text.

Of particular importance to the present study is how the author draws on a multiplicity of voices, texts, genres, and discourses in the novel's narrative. The manifestation of a dialogic interaction and appropriation of a multiplicity of voices and traces of discourses is evident. As will be amply clear in this study, the writer seems to be actively coordinating and linking together the various sources and inter-texts that seem to be engaged in a sort of a "dialogical network", a term developed by Leuder, Marsland & Nekvapil (2004:245). That is, the voices brought into the novel draw on, respond to, and evaluate statements and opinions made by the main character in the novel. Here the writer explicitly manages the interplay of voices and discourses in different texts to communicate an overall political statement and an ideological representation of events in the novel. Equally important is to note how Abu Sibah positions himself in relation to the worlds of these intertexts.

The novel is a celebration of the life and heroism of Um Nidal Farahat, the novel's protagonist. Images of women representing the nation's struggle for independence are not new to Palestinian nationalist literature taken multifaceted forms. In fact, the contributions of women in this national struggle inspired many writers, literary figures, novelists, poets and artists (see, for example, Brand, 2009; Jayyusi, 1992; Karmi, 2015; Kawar, 1996; Sabbagh, 1998). The lived reality of the Palestinian people, including women, especially in Gaza where the novel's events took place, has had a very significant impact on the writer's understanding and representations of the events and actors.

It is no surprise that we have a multiplicity of images representing Palestinian women such as the pious, determined, chaste, patient, strong, assertive, sacrificing, and observant, among others. Therefore, the prevalent image of Palestine as woman has been a means to evoke sympathy and patriotic feelings and to showcase the social and political roles and challenges faced by Palestinian women and their contributions in the Palestinian national struggle against Israeli occupation.

3. METHODOLOGY

For purposes of analysis, the researchers extracted all intertextual references to other discourses, voices, texts, and sources in the novel. Thus, 51 references were compiled. These included all direct and indirect quotations and references mentioned in the novel. These references were classified based on their content to different categories, namely, religious references including references to the Holy Quran and Prophetic Hadith, historical references and literary references (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number and percentage of intertextual references in the novel

Intertextuality Type	Number of References	Percentage %
Religious	29	56.9
Literary	16	31.4
Historical	6	11.7
Total	51	100

4. INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES IN A WHEAT SPIKE AND A SWORD

The novel is replete with a web of interrelated religious, historical, mythological and literary references, discourses and voices which are weaved together to give the narrative its solid textual fabric. As we will discuss below, the novel's textual architecture is helped by importing religious, historical and traditional references and characters, thus contributing to the richness of representations of events and characters and adding weight to various connotations. This intertextual diversity adds to the aesthetics of the multiplicity of representations and references which are molded together with the author's portrayal of the main protagonist and events. It is true that such intertexts are distant in time which entices the reader to fill in the gaps and interact actively in the reproduction of the narrative by drawing on his or her own repertoire of references and cultural and religious knowledge and values.

4.1. Religious Intertextuality: Quranic References

The writer draws heavily on religious references, especially on many verses of the Holy Quran. Such religious references take much space in the novel and this is perhaps related to the author's religious

and educational background and also given that Quranic references are always rich sources for representations, imagery, metonymy, figures of speech, overt and covert denotations and injunctions on various issues, especially for a readership that is presumably conservative. In addition, the Holy Quran is widely perceived by Muslims for its richness, rhetorical effect and easy penetration in its reader's psyche and memory. According to Bahjat and Al-Naimi (2013), adaptation and intertextuality from the Quran are commonly required phenomena used by Arabic speakers and every literary man whether he or she writes prose or composes poetry and are used for eloquence and rhetorical effect and contribute to the aesthetic structure of the text.

The author builds these Quranic texts into his narrative. His method is not to quote the whole Quranic verse, but he takes part of the verse and weaves it into the narrative while keeping this part intact, which reflects the author's thorough religious knowledge. Take, for instance, his reference to the virgin "Mary" in Chapter 24 (Al-Noor, The Light in Arabic) to make a connection to Maryam's chastity, religious observance and the ordeals she went through from her community such as gossip, recriminations and ridicule¹

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty" (Al-Noor 24:30).

Further, the main character Maryam emulates herself after is the Virgin Mary such that she had to carefully choose her friends as advised by Sheikh Ahmed Yaseen, the founder of Hamas. He reminds her of the verse²

Friends on that Day will be foes, one to another except the Righteous (Al-Zukhruf 43: 67).

Other intertextual references were used to highlight another positive quality of Maryam which is that of dedication to work and strong faith in what Allah Almighty prepared for His believing slaves,

"O whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord - let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone." (Al-Kahf 18:110), and

"And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous"(Al-Imran 3:133).

The writer also makes intertextual references from Quranic stories when Maryam links the massacres that Jews committed against the Palestinian people and what the Nimrod did to the believers of the makers of the pit. She wanted her children to be like that child who disbelieved in witchcraft and challenged the oppressive king and died defending his belief³

And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, worthy of all Praise (Al-Burooj 85:8).

The writer makes another reference when Maryam cites the Quran to prove her point. This is what we notice when she warns her children of bad companions, "Um Nidal was decisive and strict in speaking openly to her children warning them not to spend time with bad people." She supported her position citing the verses⁴

"Oye who believe! Take not My enemies and yours as friends (or protectors)" (Al-Mumtahina 60:1),

"O ye who believe! Take your precautions" (An-Nisa 4:71), and

"Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy" (Fatir 35:6).

Quranic references are used to create interrelation between texts as in the following references when "Nidal" – Maryam's son – quotes a verse from the Holy Quran to convince his mother that he will not get involved in resistance with people not belonging to the Islamic movement⁵, and he then cheekily quotes the Quranic verse,

¹ Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 70

² ibid p. 74

³ ibid p. 75

⁴ Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 86

⁵ ibid p. 100

"That was a nation which has passed on. It will have [the consequence of] what it earned, and you will have what you have earned." (Al-Baqarah 2:134)

Similarly, the writer uses a Quranic reference which is weaved in the narrative when he makes Hussam – Maryam's son – decide to settle the psychological conflict that was taking a toll on him in favour of joining the resistance. His knowledge of the verses of the Holy Quran enabled him to make such a decision. Hussam said, "the wise man is the one who chooses a noble death...sustenance is certainly guaranteed and Allah Almighty promised that", as in the verse⁶

Then by the Lord of the heaven and earth, indeed, it is truth - just as [sure as] it is that you are speaking" (Ath-dariat 51:23)

In another Quranic reference, Maryam takes blessings from the Quran by reciting verses on the bullets that will be used in carrying out military operations. The writer intertextually draws on the Quran to show her strong faith and reliance on Allah Almighty, "She would not fill a bullet in without reciting Yasin Chapter in full... The young men went out for the operation and her heart was taken apart worrying about them... she did not stop reciting the verse⁷

'And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see'" (Yasin 36:9).

The writer refers to the Quran when Maryam recites its verses joyfully when she heard the death of the collaborator Walid Hamdiyah who had a key role in the martyrdom of Imad Aqil, a senior Hamas commander, and she kept saying⁸

"Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart." (Al-Israa 17:81), and

"And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding" (Al-Baqarah 2:179).

The writer makes another reference to the Quran in highlighting the role played by Maryam in exhorting the fighters to struggle and preparing men for the liberation struggle for independence, "Um Nidal was studying the Quran with Tuqa and Um Hilmi; her eyes stopped at the verse, **"O Prophet, urge the believers to battle." (Al-Anfal 8:65)** ... and she thought of visiting the fighters to talk to them and urge them to be steadfast"⁹

Religious intertextuality aimed to paint Maryam in a revering light as a woman of chastity, religious observance, sacrifice and patriotism. Such explicit Quranic references are used as authoritative sources for the purpose of lending force to the writer's narrative. Religious intertextuality was not limited to citations from the Holy Quran. We must now turn to another religious form which concerns the Prophetic Hadiths the writer draws upon in reinforcing the positive image of the novel's main character.

4.2. Religious Intertextuality: Prophetic Hadith

In his narrative, the writer sought to rhetorically employ the Prophetic Hadiths, which are sayings full of meanings, injunctions and suggestions and are considered the second source of legislation after the Holy Quran and have an exalted status among Muslims.

Reading the novel, intertextual references to Hadith abound in various places as in the reference to the meaning of the Hadith in which the Prophet Peace Be Upon Him says: "he who pleases people in the wrath of Allah, Allah left him to the people and he who displeases people in order to please Allah, He suffices him the wrath of people." The narrator narrates on Maryam's behalf, "Thus, Sheikh Yaqub said that the woman must be keen to please her Lord even if people were displeased with her... and

⁶ ibid p. 103

⁷ ibid p. 112

⁸ Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 162

⁹ ibid p. 178

that pleasing Allah means obeying Him."¹⁰. This intertextuality demonstrates Maryam's observance and submission to God's command and her absolute confidence in Allah Almighty more than anything else, even if others failed her.

The writer also draws on the Hadith which says: "He who prays Fajr (the dawn prayer) is under the protection of Allah, so see the Son of man, God does not ask anything for your protection" (Said Al-Haq, 2011). This happened when Maryam asked her son Wesam: "Did you pray Fajr in the mosque? Why did you not, Wesam? Do you want to incur Allah's anger?"¹¹ This indicates eagerness on the part of Maryam to raise her children in the proper Islamic way and to get them in the habit of disciplining themselves and training their souls to resist laziness and lethargy.

Another Hadith was drawn into the narrative to emphasize the spirit of *Jihad* and resistance against the Zionist occupier that was prevalent, especially for Ahmed Yaseen, the founder of Hamas, and his work to instill this spirit in the new generation of Palestinian youths. The writer quotes Ahmed Yaseen, who said "Jihad is the pinnacle of Islam, and he who does Jihad has reached the peak of understanding and morality"¹². In this, the writer makes reference to the well-known Prophetic Hadith when the Prophet Muhammad instructed his companions: "Do you want me to tell you the backbone of something and its pinnacle? It's *Jihad*."

The writer makes intertextual reference in the previous paragraph with what the Prophet said in a Hadith narrated by Ibn Masood when the latter asked him: "Which work is the most favourable to Allah? The Prophet said, prayer on time" I said, "then what?" He said, "honoring one's parents, and then I said, then what? He said Jihad for the sake of Allah." (Said Al-Haq, 2011, p. 255). The writer took inspiration from this Hadith to demonstrate the strength of the Mujahideen (holy warriors) and their eagerness to perform additional religious duties as well as the obligatory prayers, because they knew that this would bring them closer to Allah the Almighty, "I asked him: Why are you fasting when this is not a Monday or a Thursday?! He answered with his usual smile: it is expiation, mother."¹³

The writer also makes an intertextual reference to a Prophetic Hadith when Maryam talks with Sheikh Salah Shihada, and the conversation that took place between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Um Haritha when she came to ask the Prophet about her son who was killed in Badr battle: "Don't you tell me about Haritha? If he was in paradise, I will be patient, and if he was elsewhere, I will be mourning too much for him." The Prophet answered her: "O Mother of Haritha, he is in paradise, your son reached the highest level of paradise." (Said Al-Haq, 2011, p. 162). Sheikh Salah Shehada comforted her saying: "you are strong Um Nidal... everyone saw you saying farewell to your martyred son Mohammed before he left for Paradise... it is Paradise, Um Nidal, God willing."¹⁴ Thus, readers' knowledge of these Hadiths is appealed to in order to achieve the writer's goal which is to emphasize perceptions of resistance and sacrifice as reflected in the dialogues between the novel's characters and as commonly understood among the readership.

4.3. Literary Intertextuality

The literary text has an important role in elevating the language of the narrative text by turning it into a driving force enriching the literary experiences of writers and conveying their vision and thoughts. Therefore, invoking the rich literary heritage becomes an important goal that the writer generally invests both aesthetically and ideationally. Al-Bayyati (1981) holds that heritage involves a cognitively rich field that needs a critical consideration in selecting its lively, dynamic elements which become witness to renewal and recontextualization in the new texts.

Reading the novel, one can find that half of the literary texts that the writer uses were poetry and folk literature. Such literature, according to Kana'nah (2012), is one of the main streams of cultural heritage of any nation and forms an integral part of its history and civilization in that it reflects the pains, hopes and aspirations of its people. This literature is transmitted from one generation to another

¹⁰ ibid p. 69

¹¹ ibid p. 74

¹² Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 77-78

¹³ ibid p. 125

¹⁴ ibid p. 149

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to express people's emotions, needs and conscience. Such meanings are clearly visible in the following examples:

The writer uses the national anthem (Biladuna, i.e. Our Country in Arabic) to demonstrate that patriotism and sacrifice for the homeland are some of the first concepts that Maryam learned very early on in her life. She learned to say the school's anthem:

"Our country, our country...
for which we make Jihad ...
for which we became martyrs
Our country, our country
From Rafah to Safed ... a map of my country
Painted in my heart ... Bequeathed to my child
Hail our glories ... our country, our country
To it we will return ... its land we will plant
So get prepared to gather ... tomorrow we will meet
Our country ... our country
To the fragrant Karmel ... to the green coast
The almond and pine ... to the blossoming orange
our country, our country"¹⁵

Abu Sibah also mentions references to the patriotic songs "My weapon rose"¹⁶ and "above the hill, under the hill" among other songs to point to a new stage during which the young men of Palestine took upon themselves the liberation of their homeland, without waiting for the Arab regimes to do so. These intertextual links seem to be intended to generate romantic notions of heroism, struggle and sacrifice that readers easily identify with, and fit with the fact that Palestinian woman stand side by side with their men in the struggle against oppression and occupation.

The writer also intertextually uses the patriotic song "Son, do you know who Ahmed Yaseen is? Firmness, courage, and certitude...Ahmed Yaseen " to demonstrate Maryam's love for the Mujahideen and the symbols of *Jihad* like Ahmed Yaseen and Abdel Aziz Rantisi and others.¹⁷

It is clear from the foregoing that the writer employs literary intertextuality to serve the ideas and meanings he conveyed in the novel. He focuses on literary texts which emphasize common beliefs and knowledge systems which are consistent with the general feeling of the novel. These literary references are used as a resource to enrich the text and create a harmonious interrelation between the various intertexts in the narrative.

4.4. Historical Intertextuality

Historical intertextuality can be defined as intertextuality that stems from the overlap of selected historical texts with the original text, which seems appropriate and consistent with the creative experience of the writer and aims to enrich the literary work (Az-Zu'bi, 1993). Historical intertextuality can be traced in a number of historical figures that the writer brings into the text in order to enrich the artistic significance of the narrative, for example, Antara Bin Shaddad, Az-zeer Salem, and Ali bin Abi Taleb. The significance of all these characters seems to emphasize Maryam's keenness on the presence of those heroic figures in inciting the men to fight the Zionists. Abu Sibah introduces these figures in a positive light as having an impact on Maryam as she exhorts her sons to fight the enemy.

The narrator also brings in the characters of Abdullah Ibn Saba', Abdullah Ibn Abi Saloul, and Abi Raghail for they symbolize treachery and betrayal. This is when Maryam was educating her sons about the serious threats posed by Israel's collaborators: "How many freedom fighters were killed because of

¹⁵ Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 12

¹⁶ *ibid* p. 60

¹⁷ *ibid* p. 173

a collaborator? How many people were violated because of a collaborator ... I told them about Abi Raghaf, Abdullah Ibn Saba, and Abdullah Ibn Abi Saloul... I planted in them the certitude that the martyrdom of the freedom fighter cannot happen without the betrayal of a traitor."¹⁸

The novelist also brings in the historical character Mother Hajar as she was walking between Safa and Marwah in search of water for her son Ishmael. The narrator makes a link between Hajar and Maryam to demonstrate the heroic role Maryam played in defending her sons, "the Jews stormed into her house several times and severely beat her sons, so the spirit and heart of Hajar possessed her, while the latter was running between Safa and Marwa in search for water... but the thirst of [Maryam] Um Nidal was to protect her sons, running from one room to another knocking at the doors, wishing she could break them, to save them [her sons] while receiving punches and blows from soldiers' batons in order to protect them."¹⁹

The historical figure Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam is invoked to demonstrate the strength of Maryam's faith and her firm belief in the high price and sacrifice she will offer on the altar of Jihad and resistance that she had chosen. That is why she took Sheikh al-Qassam as a role model, "she did not put into calculation what the Zionists would do... nor what would happen to her home or sons, nor did she calculate the anger expected from Abu Nidal [her husband]... 'For the sake of Allah is everything we get' was the slogan of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam and his comrades."²⁰

Other intertextual references to some historical events are drawn upon by Maryam to teach her sons to reject Zionist Jews and love *Jihad* and resistance, "I told them about the crimes of Jews in Deir Yaseen, Jaffa, Beit Daras, and Abu Sweireh; I told them about the Jewish gangs, and how they slaughtered the youths."²¹

The writer also brings up historical figures and events, in a single paragraph when Taqwa, Maryam's Egyptian friend consoles her, "This is Islam, Um Nidal... this is the path of martyrdom... look at the martyrs of Badr and Uhud... look at Hamza Look at Jerusalem ... and how it was liberated by Saladin, look at Hittin and Ain Jaloot... come on, rise up... we want to send a new message to the whole universe... Not to the Zionists only."²² These well-known historical references are weaved into the text highlighting Maryam's awareness of her own history and the role that she embarks on in defending her religion and cause.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An intertextual view of text relates to the various traces of other discourses, genres and voices, etc., drawn upon in the production and comprehension of a text. As we examined in this biographical novel, the writer presented in positive light the life of Um Nidal Farahat, whose life sheds light on an important stage in the Palestinian national struggle against the Israeli occupation.

This novel is a celebration of the life of a heroic woman Um Nidal Farahat, who has been presented as steadfast, firm-but-sad looking woman embodying the nation and its national struggle. This woman becomes a symbol or a metaphor for the nation's sacrifices and spirit of resistance. Um Nidal represented strength in the face of adversity; she was pious, strong, active and resilient and became a finest expression of the Palestinian spirit in its deep-rooted steadfastness. The personification of resistance and hope in a woman figure is illuminating, as the selection of these references gives insights about the roles attributed to Palestinian women in a context of occupation and resistance. The particular attributes associated with Um Nidal points to the imagined Palestinian woman the author is advocating. In a few words, she came to represent the nation in its struggle for freedom and liberation, and these concepts are given greater immediacy and concreteness in the novel's events and main protagonist.

The writer made frequent intertextual religious, historical and literary references. Religious intertextuality were mainly drawn upon, and this is perhaps due to the writer's religious background and the fact that religious intertextuality serves the general idea of the novel. Abu Sibah was adept in invoking these intertexts which he sees as relevant contexts for the readers. In this respect, he employs

¹⁸ Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 75

¹⁹ *ibid* p. 98

²⁰ *ibid* p. 103

²¹ Attallah Abu Sibah's 'A Wheat Spike and a Sword' p. 74

²² *ibid* p. 173

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Quranic texts and Prophetic Hadiths which carried implications and symbolic meanings and were artistically invested and weaved throughout to serve the overall idea of the novel. Such religious references are connected to values and ideals pervasive in Palestinian society and related to the lived reality of Palestinians.

The writer employed historical intertextuality, especially on historical figures in order to highlight important aspects of the life of struggle and resistance of the novel's protagonist Um Nidal Farahat. Literary intertextuality was also drawn upon to serve the novel's general themes. Patriotic and folk songs were predominantly referred to in the novel, probably due to the fact that such texts are frequently used in Palestinian contexts. Such references contributed to the key themes of resistance, struggle and sacrifice that dominated the novel.

Hatim and Mason (1993) hold that intertextuality is not merely an amalgamation of "bits ad pieces" taken from other texts, or the mere occasional reference to another text. Rather the inclusion of other textual references is motivated by some reason such as text function and the overall communicative purpose. What we saw in the novel is a multiplicity of discourses that is weaved in the novel reflecting a specific worldview glorifying a woman fighter who became a symbol of resistance and sacrifice. The convergence of these discourses is intertextually illuminating given the difficult social and political circumstances which the Palestinian woman experiences. Contexts of occupation, war and loss have imposed on Palestinian women unusual roles which are manifested in the representations of women in Palestinian literature in general and in this novel in specific.

This multiplicity of voices and inter-texts drawn upon indicates a harmony and consensus over the roles of women in Palestinian society and over the nationalist goals of the Palestinian liberation movement. In other words, such references were not a mere importation of various discourses and texts for aesthetic purposes, but they reflected the social and political situation in which many Gazans lived through and which the author tried to depict.

The meanings of the references here should be understood in relation to the contexts of occupation and resistance against the occupier. Such references are emotionally powerful as they invoke religious and romantic notions of resistance and protection of the homeland. A solid knowledge of the political situation is important to understand the multiplicity of roles Um Nidal took. These references were not drawn upon out of nowhere, but they are closely linked to a local context. The various intertextual references were meant to tap into and emphasize social notions of sacrifice, heroism, patriotism, and honour, and to instill in the targeted readers the belief that they had to fight, resist, sacrifice and defend the homeland.

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